ISRAEL'S REAL STRATEGY—A REPORT FROM NABLUS

THE NEW REPUBLIC

TERRORISM AND TORTURE
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APRIL 22, 2002

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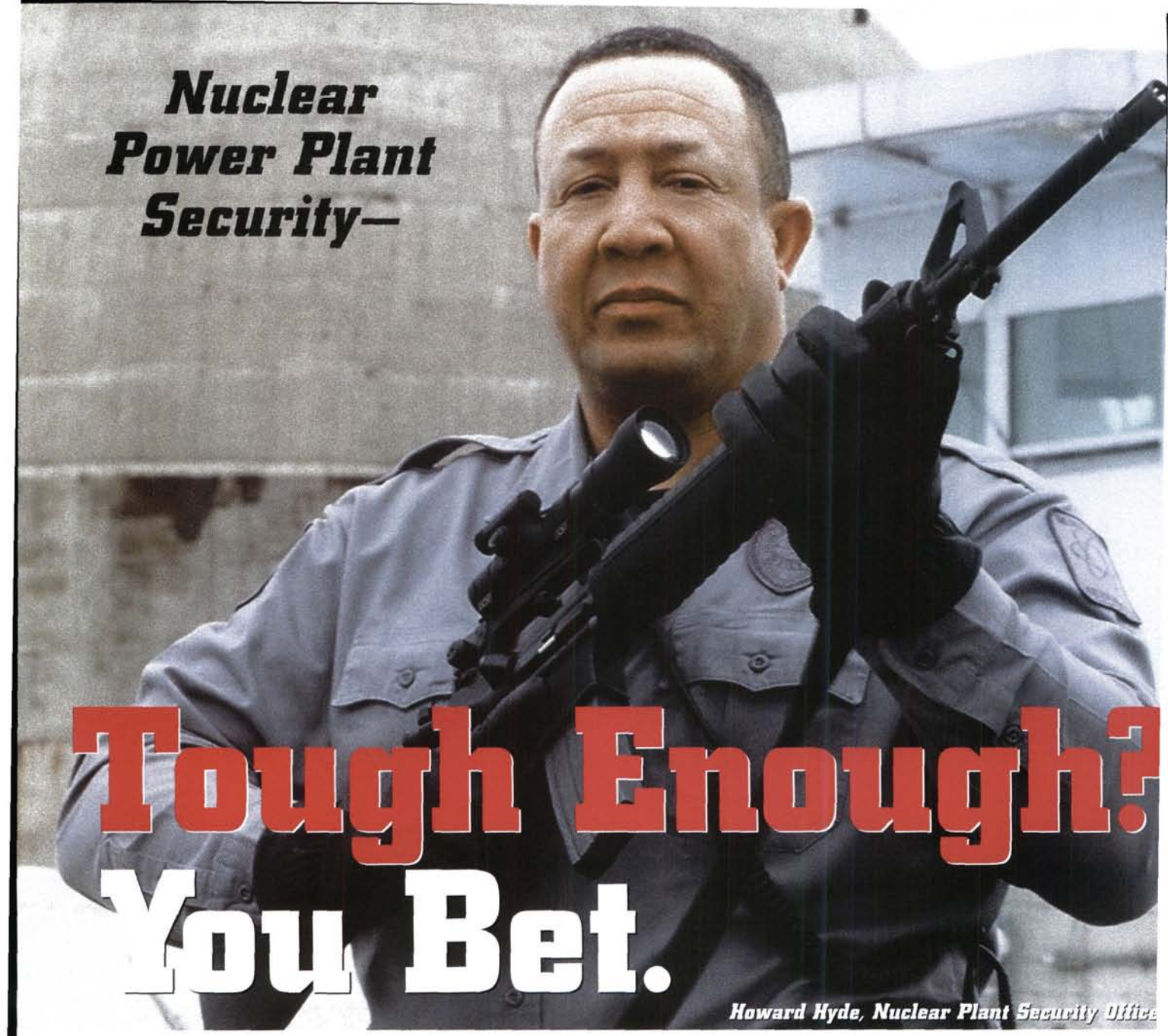

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
APRIL 22, 2002
ISSUE 4,553

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On the Cover : Illustration by JOE HEROUN/H2C
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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 226, Number 15, Issue 4,553, April 22, 2002. (Printed in the United States on April 10, 2002.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 4 & 11, March 25 & April 1, July 8 & 15, August 5 & 12, August 19 & 26, September 9 & 16, December 2 & 9, and December 30, 2002 & January 6, 2003) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Meredith Cossa at (202) 508-4485 or our NY sales office at (212) 465-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). **© 2002 by The New Republic, LLC.****(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

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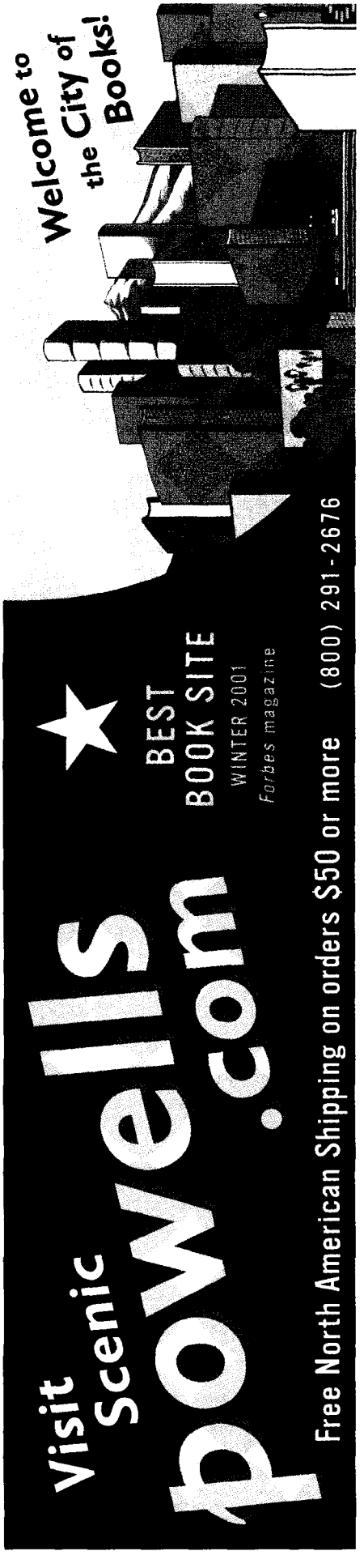


CORRESPONDENCE

Funding crisis

TO THE EDITORS:

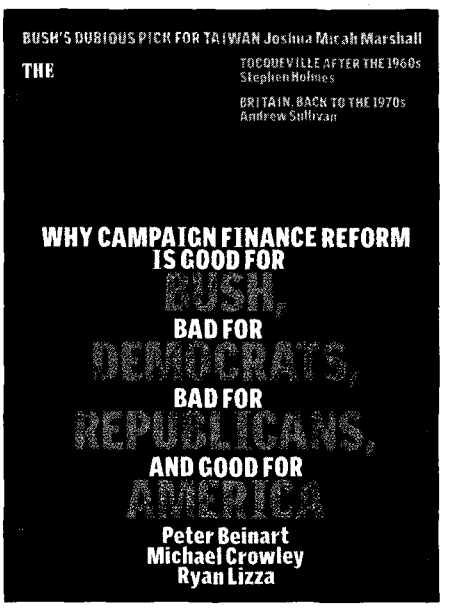
I was surprised and disappointed to see the references to The Nixon Center and to me personally in Joshua Micah Marshall's article "Pacific Whim" (March 4 & 11). I was surprised because I had never spoken to anyone identifying himself with TNR about Douglas H. Paal or his Asia Pacific Policy Center (APPC). In fact, Marshall placed several calls to me and to a colleague at The Nixon Center identifying himself with *The New York Times Magazine*. Was he misleading us? Or did the *Times Magazine* give Marshall an assignment but reject his product?

I was disappointed because Marshall's characterization of the discussions between The Nixon Center and Paal is quite different from what I told Marshall. I made clear that I was not aware of any impropriety whatsoever on the part of Paal or the APPC. I also explained that our conversations about a possible merger had not gone far enough for The Nixon Center to have received details of the APPC's finances or programs. My point to Marshall was that different organizations quite legitimately have different missions and cultures and that it is rare to find a perfect match, particularly when the institutions in question are of roughly the same size. To imply on this basis, as Marshall does, that The Nixon Center "got a sense of what [Paal's] real business was" is reckless.

DIMITRI K. SIMES
President
The Nixon Center
Washington, D.C.

JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL REPLIES:

Last December I signed a contract with *The New York Times Magazine* to write an article about Douglas H. Paal. Thus, in good faith, I told interview subjects I was writing an article for that publication. Later, after an amicable disagreement with the *Times Magazine*, I withdrew the piece and brought it to TNR. It is hardly incumbent upon a writer to go back and notify every interview subject that the article will appear in another magazine. As to Simes's second point, part of his error is in assuming that his interview was the only source for my account of Paal's dealings with The Nixon Center. In interviews with two other Nixon Center sources, I learned that Paal's negotiations with the Center came to naught because the Center's staff and board were concerned about commingling Paal's foreign funding with the Center's finances, as well as what one Center source termed the "commercial" nature of Paal's work. Another source did recall that Simes was the biggest advocate of bringing Paal on board and apparently the least concerned about the questions of ethics and propriety surrounding Paal's work. Nevertheless, Simes confirmed—albeit gingerly—the essence of this account.



Walking papers

TO THE EDITORS:

Matthew M. Hoffman's analysis of the John Walker Lindh criminal case is compelling, but he fails in his argument for the basis on which he would like to see Lindh tried—that is, as one who has renounced citizenship to "take up arms" against the United States ("Discharged," March 4 & 11). Too bad Hoffman doesn't apply the same rigorous legal analysis to the method of conviction and punishment he favors, for he would have to take into account that Lindh claims to have joined the Taliban specifically to fight the Northern Alliance and decided to do so long before the United States invaded Afghanistan.

Lindh surrendered to the Northern Alliance, and there is no evidence that he engaged in battle with U.S. forces. That he was in prison when the United States arrived on the ground is clear evidence of this. The U.S. government should pay

continued on page 49

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be fewer than 200 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. Please do not send letters via fax.

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Heal, Don't Harm

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

A few weeks ago, a healthy young man who was donating a part of his liver to save his brother's life, died in one of the country's most prestigious teaching hospitals—a world-class organ transplant facility. How could this happen? Too few health professionals caring for too many patients.

This kind of tragedy is becoming all too commonplace in healthcare institutions whose purpose is to heal but whose policies too often cause harm.

A frenzy of mergers, acquisitions and consolidations, a lack of oversight and regulation, a focus on competition and profits rather than on patients and quality care, have resulted in the sad state of affairs where families fear the hospital. We suffer more than the usual anxiety when we take our loved ones to what should be—and once was—a zone of comfort and relief.

Anyone who has spent time in a hospital these days can tell you: Nurses and other health professionals are overworked and overtired. Dangerously low staffing levels at many hospitals lead to mandatory overtime and exhausted workers. In addition, many procedures once performed by nurses are now being turned over to staff never trained to assume such roles.

It's no wonder that medical errors are on the rise. Dedicated healthcare workers feel beaten down, and many are fleeing the profession in droves. Those remaining are left with even heavier workloads and unsafe working conditions. It's a vicious cycle. Hospitals and medical facilities have set the staffing levels so low and made the working conditions so intolerable that trained and talented professionals are seeking other careers—just as teachers and prospective teachers are leaving or deciding not to pursue their chosen profession. Serious shortages in both fields pose a grave national crisis.

Exhausted nurses

Americans can be proud of our many talented healthcare workers. Nurses, technicians and aides, who work closely with patients, are an integral part of a quality healthcare system. They can help reduce medical errors in hospitals, which, according to an authoritative report from the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, lead to at least 98,000 preventable deaths a year. But despite their hard work and commitment, too many healthcare professionals are overburdened, and too many patients are increasingly at risk.

Mandatory overtime is a particularly dangerous practice because it sends exhausted nurses back onto the floor and undermines hospitals' efforts to deliver high-quality patient care. As one RN puts it: "When I've been up for 24 hours, my judgment gets a little shaky—and so do my hands."

Understaffing and mandatory overtime pose a danger to patients.

There is some new hope for ending forced overtime for nurses and other healthcare workers. New Jersey recently enacted a law banning the practice, and several other states are considering similar legislation. But the crisis in our healthcare industry is a national problem requiring a national solution. That's why hundreds of dedicated healthcare workers will come to Washington, D.C., this month to urge their elected representatives to enact a federal law banning mandatory overtime.

Too many children still uninsured

But quality is not the only problem in our healthcare system. It is unconscionable that in this great nation we continue to see an increase in uninsured people, including millions of children. What is more, states facing budget shortfalls increasingly are unable to respond to the challenge. It is estimated that as many as 44 million Americans are without health insurance. Although the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)—a federal-state partnership created in 1997 to provide health coverage to previously uninsured children—has helped lower the number of uninsured children in recent years, there are still nearly nine million young people who are at constant risk because they lack insurance. We must support and try to expand this valuable program.

For nearly a decade, the United States has ranked near the bottom of industrialized nations in healthcare. We are among the nations having the highest death rates for young children and young adults. Lives could be saved if the richest nation in the world made high-quality, affordable healthcare available to all.

We can avoid a healthcare catastrophe if we act now. We owe it to the healthcare workers coming to Washington this month to support solutions to a problem that politicians have avoided for too long. And we owe it to our nation's children and to the Americans who have lost their jobs and lack the security of quality health benefits. One nurse's comment says it all: "By the end of my 16th hour on shift, my caring and sympathy have drained away. I'm too tired. Patients deserve better, and so do nurses." ▮

Where We Stand **is published once every month in *The New Republic*.** **© Sandra Feldman 2002.** **To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.** **To see previous columns and access other resources, visit our web site at http://www.aft.org.**

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Word Play

For leftists, economics determines international relations; for realists, power does. But the extraordinary thing about American foreign policy since September 11 is the extent to which it has been shaped by language. In the terrible days after the World Trade Center fell, the Bush administration grasped for words that would capture America's resolve. And it came up with "war on terrorism." Through endless repetition, the phrase was fleshed out. "Terrorism" meant violence by individuals or groups (but not governments) against civilians, no matter what the cause. "War" didn't connote a merely military effort, but it suggested a broad struggle with the urgency, and Manichaean clarity, of a battlefield campaign.

And then something strange happened. As with so many other icons of American culture, the phrase "war on terrorism" began catching on overseas. Other governments, it turned out, also wanted to invest their conflicts with the moral clarity the United States sought after September 11. All of a sudden, Russia was fighting a "war on terrorism" in Chechnya; India was waging one in Kashmir; the Philippines was waging one on Basilan Island; China was waging one in Xianjing province; Sri Lanka was waging one in its Tamil-dominated North; and, of course, Israel was waging one in the West Bank.

Before September 11, America's orientation in most of these conflicts had been toward political solutions. The fact that many of the rebel groups in question had sanctioned attacks on civilians did not, in American eyes, render them beyond the pale as negotiating partners. After all, in its struggle against the Soviet Union, the United States itself had backed rebel groups with civilian blood on their hands. And Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have both met with Gerry Adams, the political leader of an organization with a long (and never fully renounced) history of violence against innocents.

But after the World Trade Center fell, the dispassionate language of political understanding and political compromise began almost immediately to stick in America's throat. Asking us to negotiate with our terrorists, insisted Russia, India, and Israel, is like asking you to negotiate with Al Qaeda. And so horrifying was the suggestion that it changed American policy. The United States tilted hard toward Moscow in its military campaign in Chechnya; toward New Delhi in its battle in Kashmir; and, most obviously, toward Israel in its struggle with the Palestinians. The United States needed moral clarity in its own struggle against terrorism, and if that required seeing in other struggles a moral clarity that the United States hadn't perceived prior to 9/11, so be it.

The policy shift occasioned by September 11 has its merits. It has made the United States less naïve about the people who lead the independence movements in Kashmir, Chechnya, and Palestine—which is a good thing, considering that they are, by and large, an odious bunch. But the problem is that no matter how odious those leaders are, the movements they lead are fundamentally different from Al Qaeda, which means the response must be as well. Russia's, India's, and Israel's "war on terrorism" is not like our own. And in order to craft wise and decent policy, the Bush administration needs to explain why.

The critical difference is that the wars in Kashmir, Palestine, and Chechnya are wars of national liberation. The terrorists seek to end a foreign occupation and create an independent state on a defined piece of land. That doesn't make their demands legitimate: Yasir Arafat's definition of a Palestinian state is clearly grandiose and dangerous (especially given that Israel is so small—and therefore particularly imperiled by such fantasies); Kashmir and Chechnya probably shouldn't be independent states at all. And it doesn't make their methods legitimate either: There's no excuse for deliberately targeting civilians. But as a practical matter, wars of national liberation are easier (though certainly not easy) to resolve politically and much harder to resolve militarily than the kind we're fighting against Al Qaeda.

Because Al Qaeda is international, it doesn't have a clearly defined set of territorial demands. To the degree it has any demands at all, they are to rid the Muslim lands of infidels and of their culture—to establish a vast Islamist caliphate across much of the globe. And as with Nazism and international communism, movements that seek world domination don't make very good negotiating partners. The rebel movements in Palestine, Chechnya, and Kashmir all contain healthy doses of religious fanaticism, but it is nationalism that ultimately binds them together. For Al Qaeda, by contrast, religious fanaticism is all there is. Chechen or Kashmiri nationalism can take religious or secular, violent or peaceful forms. But it's impossible to imagine Al Qaeda pursuing its goals peacefully—because world conflict itself is one of the organization's primary aims.

It is precisely because Al Qaeda is not a nationalist movement that the United States defeated it militarily in Afghanistan. (In the 1980s Russia battled Afghan nationalism; last fall the United States actually used Afghan nationalism to its advantage—urging the Afghans to rid themselves of their Arab overlords and their Taliban lackeys.) Because Al Qaeda was essentially a foreign organization in Afghanistan, its members had trouble taking refuge among the local population, the prerequisite for a successful guerrilla war. America's ability to distinguish Al Qaeda operatives from the population at large limited civilian casualties, which kept local public opinion behind America's war. And once the war ended, the United States used that public support to install a legitimate, sympathetic government, which kept the United States from having to govern the country itself.

In Kashmir, Chechnya, and Palestine those conditions don't exist. If the vast majority of Palestinians support terrorism, then terrorists can easily take refuge among the civilian population, which dramatically increases the risk of civilian casualties, which in turn shifts popular support further in the terrorists' favor. And even if Israel (or India or Russia) did militarily vanquish terrorism for a time, they would be unable to find a Hamid Karzai—a legitimate local, anti-terrorist leader—to run the West Bank (or Kashmir or Chechnya) and thus allow them to withdraw. When you face a national liberation movement that enjoys the overwhelming support of its people, the only way to secure a military victory is to occupy its territory permanently.

Does Israel have the same right to defend itself against suicide bombers in Tel Aviv as the United States has to defend itself against suicide hijackers in New York? Is an attack on the Indian parliament as evil as an attack on Congress? Absolutely. But the question isn't moral; it's strategic. And strategically, Israel's and India's wars against terrorism differ radically from America's because Israel and India aren't merely fighting a terrorist network; they're fighting a people. And a people can be militarily occupied, but they can't be militarily crushed. The moral right to respond to terror with single-minded, overwhelming force doesn't make such a response successful. And in the end, if a government's response to terror doesn't stop future terror, the moral clarity it provides is cold comfort indeed.

PETER BEINART

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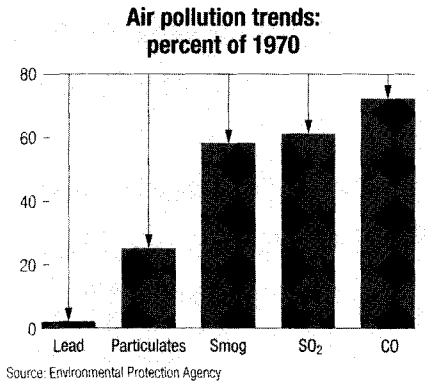
The broken link

Many still hold the view that as the United States' industrial economy continues to grow, as the number of cars continues to rise, and as the number of miles driven sets new records, there will be an ongoing deterioration in air quality. In other words, there is inevitably a perverse link between economic growth and environmental quality.

In fact, a recent poll conducted by the Wirthlin research firm found that two-thirds of Americans believe that our air quality has been getting worse. Fortunately, it just ain't so.

The latest evidence comes from the Foundation for Clean Air Progress (FACP), a nonprofit group founded to educate the public about the nation's air quality. FACP looked closely at U.S. government data over three decades and found extremely encouraging improvements.



Source: Environmental Protection Agency

Here's what has gone up: energy consumption (41 percent); U.S. population (38 percent); employment (70 percent); licensed drivers (71 percent); vehicle registrations (99 percent); vehicle miles traveled (148 percent); growth in the economy in inflation-adjusted terms (158 percent).

And air quality measures? Five of the six most important have improved.

Lead has dropped 98 percent; particulates 75 percent; smog-causing compounds 42 percent; sulfur dioxide 39 percent; and carbon monoxide 28 percent. In the three-decade period, only nitrogen oxides have risen, but much less than the growth in economic indicators, and even these pollutants have recently begun to fall.

The improvement has been so dramatic that air quality "exceedances" in Southern California have fallen to less than 40 days a year, about 60 percent lower than the number seen just a decade ago.

These encouraging results have not been confined to the U.S., of course. Other areas of the world, such as Europe, have also experienced dramatic improvements in air quality.

How has this been accomplished? In the U.S. we have seen more than three decades of effort devoted to reducing pollution and cleaning up the air. In this period there have been concerted efforts by both the public and private sectors to reduce emissions and to improve vehicle mileage. Very large investments in advanced equipment and new technology have been required. Here, as in other parts of the world, we have learned how to produce more, to do it differently, and to do it better.

Recent air quality measurements provide unassailable evidence that energy growth and rising material prosperity need not have an adverse effect on **any** aspect of environmental quality. This provides a clear example where an environmental challenge once thought intractable is being overcome. It demonstrates that progress is possible as long as there is a determined and cooperative effort involving both public and private sectors, harnessed to the power of advanced technology.

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Debunking Myths About Standardized Testing

Kurt M. Landgraf, President & CEO of Educational Testing Service

Given the reality of the Bush administration's recently signed "Leave No Child Behind" Act, one truth about American education is more certain than ever before: Standardized tests are here to stay.

Also likely to linger are myths about standardized testing. It is important to take the time to refute these myths because they only serve to detract from the value of assessments, to distract policy-makers in the public debate about testing, and to disturb parents and their children.

MYTH: Multiple choice tests only measure the rote memorization of facts.

The key word in this myth is "only." It is not the format of a test answer – A,B,C, or D – that determines what is measured; it is the type of question that determines the response. At ETS, we have a rich history of developing tests that assess critical reasoning skills – intellectual horsepower, if you will -- not just facts that are purged as soon as students hand in their answer sheets.

MYTH: Testing for accountability is popular only to trendy politicians and the businesses that create and administer them.

This is blatantly untrue, although it is a charge leveled by a vocal but tiny segment of our society that makes up the so-called "testing backlash." Extensive national public opinion research commissioned by ETS over the past year proves conclusively that an overwhelming majority of Americans demand that public schools receive increased federal funding and that they be held to strict standards of accountability. The public also believes that such accountability can be achieved, at least in part, through the appropriate use of fair assessments.

MYTH: American students are under a lot of pressure already and are even more stressed out at the prospect of increased testing and higher academic standards.

Not true. According to a recent Public Agenda poll,

"When you raise standards, people generally rise to the occasion and embrace the challenge."

Reality Check 2002, most students say that they can handle the testing as well as higher hurdles for promotion and graduation. Very few seem apprehensive and most agree that they could work harder in school. When you raise standards, people generally rise to the occasion and embrace the challenge.

MYTH: The increased emphasis on mandatory examinations will lead to instructors "teaching to the test."

The recent Reality Check 2002 poll reports that while this is a real concern, only about one quarter of teachers say they are actually doing it. The true aim is for teachers to teach the curriculum to which standards are tied. Agreed-upon goals of academic accomplishment and achievement in all subjects will be set by the states. Tests will help measure the schools' progress in meeting those goals.

Tests are best viewed not as barriers, but rather as opportunities to demonstrate what our children know and what they can do. Tests are not problems; they can supply us with information to help solve problems in our schools. That's why they are valuable tools. Because the need for education reform in our country definitely is not a myth.

ETS Educational Testing Service

We invite you to continue this dialog by contacting us via e-mail at: issues@ets.org

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Fog of War

GEORGE IS GOING wobbly, and so is his administration. American policy in the Middle East in recent months has been inconstant and incompetent, swinging from Israeli angles to Arab angles, speaking in contradictions, trying to have it all ways, being pushed around by this ally and that ally, preferring allies who are not real allies of America to allies who are real allies of America.

The occasion for the American flailing is Israel's anti-terrorist operation in the West Bank, which the United States cannot but support in principle but is failing to support in practice. What Israel calls Operation Defensive Shield is in no significant way different from what the United States called Operation Enduring Freedom, except that it is even more urgent, since the killers in the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and Haifa and Netanya and Afula come from next door. But suddenly the United States is treating Israel's campaign of self-defense as just a huge strategic headache. In the weeks after the destruction of the World Trade Center, the joke made the rounds that Ariel Sharon had called George W. Bush to counsel restraint, but the joke is no longer funny.

The Arab states, and more particularly the Arab regimes that live in fear of the street and therefore pander to it, disapprove of the Israeli operation, and the Bush administration dreads their disapproval. Whether or not the Bushies believe that these Arab regimes truly care about the Palestinians, the Bushies do believe that the displeasure of the Arab regimes is an interference in the American plan to challenge and even depose Saddam Hussein, and so they are doing everything they can to avert this displeasure. But surely the Saudi opposition to the American plan has nothing to do with the Palestinians: The Saudis made a religion of the integrity of Iraq a decade ago, too, even as Saddam was trying to set the whole region on fire. Jordan's opposition is a matter of pure self-interest, dictated by geography and monarchical insecurity. The Syrian opposition is, well, more Syrian oppositionism. And so on. So why is the Bush administration offering no resistance to the Arab view that Palestine is the root cause of all things Middle Eastern? The extent to which the United States is not resisting the Arab analysis was demonstrated last week in Agadir, when the King of Morocco insulted the secretary of state and the secretary of state agreed to be insulted. Colin Powell was kept waiting and then told that he was in the wrong place, and from this he concluded that Ariel Sharon is the problem.

For a long time the Bush administration insisted that Yasir Arafat must bring an end to Palestinian terrorism against Israel. Arafat did not do so. Then Israel decided to bring an end to Palestinian terrorism against Israel, and the Bush administration wants Israel not to do so. So what, precisely, does Washington propose should be done about the exploding martyrs? Instead of reining in terror, the United States is reining in the war against terror. It has also decided to forget everything that it knows about Arafat: When Powell announced that he will meet Arafat in Ramallah, he was announcing the restoration of Arafat's prestige in American eyes. We are moving backward, in a frantic attempt to recover the illusions that we briefly lost. The post-September world is becoming the pre-September world, in which America has its SUVs (Saudi utility vehicles, we may as well call them) and its energy prices and its true friends in Riyadh, who want nothing but justice for Palestine. But if anybody has any doubts about the Saudi moral sense, or about the quality of its friendship for America, they should consider this recent comment by Prince Bandar bin Sultan in *The Washington Post*: "I am sympathetic to the suffering of the American people and the anger of the American leadership over terrorist attacks on the United States. However, I now feel great sympathy with the suffering of the Palestinian people and the anger of the Palestinian leadership because of the terrorist Israeli aggression against them." The responsibility for Osama bin Laden is his country's, and he dares to compare Ariel Sharon to Osama bin Laden.

Still, the hour is late for debater's points. Too many innocent Israelis and Palestinians have died. About this no decent person can disagree. It would be awfully wonderful if the Israelis could immediately withdraw from the hostile casbahs of the West Bank in an expectation of calm and reason, so that the scholasticisms of Tenet and Mitchell can be given a chance. For the Palestinian question cannot be reduced to a question of terrorism: About this, too, no decent person could disagree. But if it is not *only* a question of terrorism, it is *also* a question of terrorism; and neither Tenet not Mitchell has the answer to it. The United States, of all powers and all peoples, should not treat Israel's defense of itself as an inconvenience. ■

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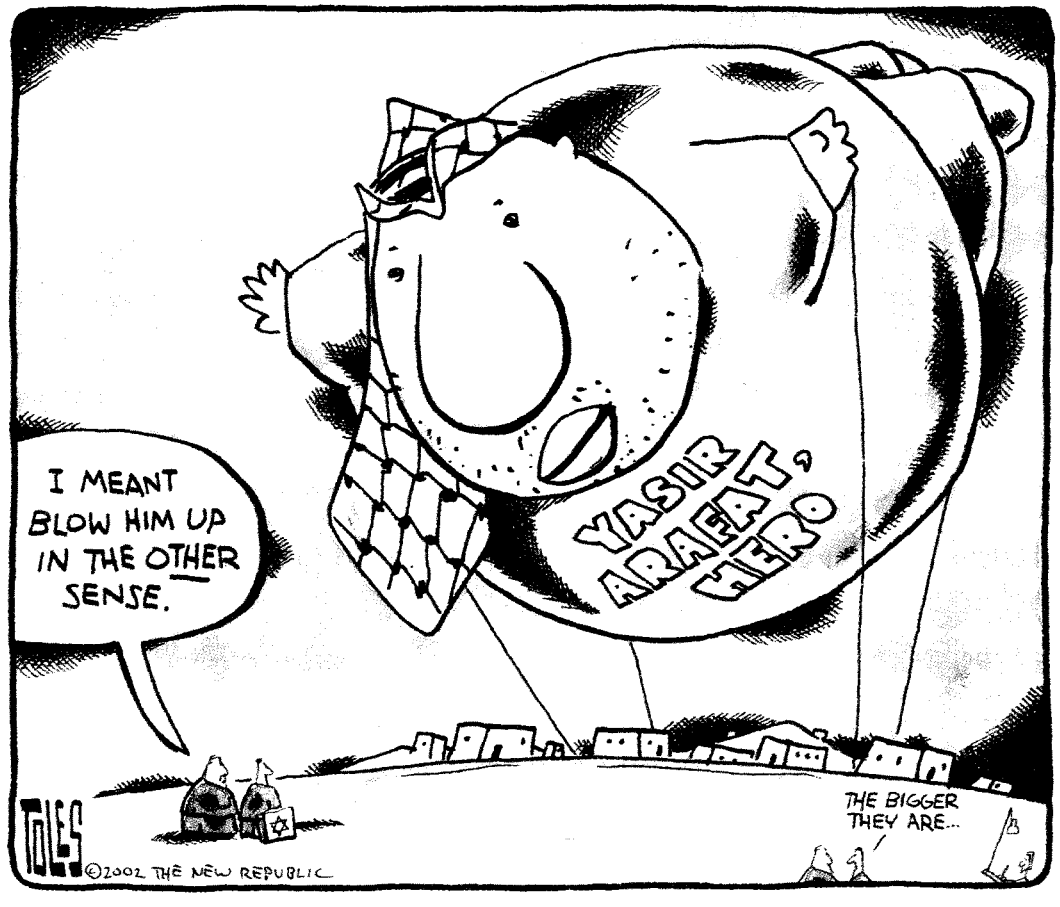
NOTEBOOK

MILLER GENUINE DAFT: Earlier this week Georgia Senator Zell Miller delivered an impassioned speech bemoaning the fact that Congress has yet to pass a prescription-drug benefit. "So far, they've waited in vain, each day growing older and weaker," he implored. "You know who we in Washington are like? We're like those who passed by that man in the ditch in the biblical story of the Good Samaritan—passed him by and refused to help him." Why is there no prescription-drug benefit? The main reason is that even according to Republicans, President George W. Bush's budget doesn't provide sufficient funds to pay for one. And the reason for that, of course, was that the budget couldn't accommodate both a new benefit and Bush's massive tax cut, for which Miller voted and provided crucial bipartisan cover. But—surprise!—Miller didn't mention the budget or the tax cut as reasons Congress hasn't passed a drug benefit. Instead he pointed the finger at "presidential-candidate posturing." It's not that a massive tax cut has left the government unable to afford a drug benefit, you see, it's that Democrats don't *want* one so they can run for president. "Please, my fellow senators," Miller scolds, "let us get our priorities in order." In fact, many of Miller's fellow senators would love to rearrange our fiscal priorities. Unfortunately, Zell has already done that for us.

GUSHER: "With each passing hour, the Mideast grows more unstable, and the future grows more uncertain, and with each passing day the United States grows more dependent on foreign sources for energy," intoned Alaska Senator Frank Murkowski in a recent plea for his colleagues to pass the White House energy plan. "What does tomorrow hold? More chaos, more bloodshed." Not to mention, if Murkowski gets his way, more pork. Given the unrest in the Middle East, there is an argument to be made for the centerpiece of the Bush energy bill—opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil drilling—at least if it were married to good-faith conservation efforts, such as increasing fuel-efficiency standards for American cars. (It's not.) There's absolutely no argument to be made, however, for the boatloads of goodies K Street has been tucking into the 590-page bill under the guise of a national emergency. As *The Wall Street Journal* has reported, West Virginia Senators Robert Byrd and Jay Rockefeller have let it be known that they might support ANWR drilling—provided the steel industry receives a multibillion-dollar rescue package. Farm groups have lent their support to drilling—in return for a section in the bill that promises $1.3 billion in tax benefits to ethanol producers (read: Iowa primary voters), doubling the size of that wildly inefficient industry. Finally, there are the large private-sector utilities that have procured an amendment shifting electricity-transmission regulation from the federal government to a "self-regulating industry-reliability group" and "regional transmission organizations." Though the overhaul is tangentially related to energy, it does nothing to alleviate a potential oil crisis and probably will hurt consumers. Once Democrats looked certain to kill this mess with a filibuster. But by spreading around all this pork, the bill's backers may have given it new life. Says industry lobbyist (and former Louisiana senator) J. Bennett Johnston, "I have been surprised at how relatively easy this has gone." We wish we could say the same.

THE MONEY PARTY: When Congress finally passed the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill last month, Republicans were all but unanimous in charging that it would never work, that it was riddled with loopholes that would shift money to the darkest corners of politics.



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"Reformers claim this bill will increase disclosure and shine the light on big money in politics. This is, of course, not true," warned Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell. "Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker," explained Michigan Representative Joe Knollenberg, "I support real reform with no loopholes and full disclosure—not just lip service to reform." Having thus had their say, Knollenberg's House brethren this week hopped down off their high horses and got to work widening loopholes and squelching disclosure. Specifically, they tried to relax disclosure requirements in the most shadowy corner of the campaign finance world—so-called "stealth" PACs, or 527s, which can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money. (The phony "Republicans for Clean Air" PAC that sandbagged John McCain to the tune of $2.5 million during the 2000 GOP primaries was of this breed.) These are precisely the groups whose influence is likely to grow once campaign finance reform takes effect next year, making disclosure all the more important. Nonetheless, the House GOP sought to exempt some 527s from the stringent disclosure requirements of federal law if they instead file reports at the state level, where campaign finance laws are often flimsy. The effort failed when 25 House Republicans broke ranks to vote with the Democrats. But given the longtime GOP position that the way to fix campaign finance is not contribution limits but rather full, fast disclosure, you'd think their colleagues wouldn't have minded a bit more paperwork in the name of "real reform." Unfortunately, you'd have been wrong.

NORTHERN EXPOSURE: In this week's Cambridge Diarist, Martin Peretz notes recent through-the-looking-glass statements by members of the Norwegian committee that awards the Nobel Peace Prize, who have said they wished they could "recall" the Nobel given to Shimon Peres in 1994—but not the one awarded to Yasir Arafat. But Norway's moral confusion when it comes to the Middle East goes further still. Bruce Bawer (*brucebawer.com*) draws our attention to an April 9 article in the Oslo newspaper *Dagbladet* describing the recent experience of a visitor to the Norwegian Parliament. According to the article, Ingmar Tveitt, the friend of a Parliament member, was "dressed in a thin summer jacket with the Star of David on the chest pocket." After speaking with Parliament members in the Parliament restaurant, Tveitt was "sought out by two security guards who asked him to come with them 'because they had received reactions' to Tveitt's flag symbol.... The two guards escorted him to the wardrobe. After he had hung up the jacket, they followed him back to his table." According to Bawer, Tveitt said, "People walk around [in Parliament] with Palestinian scarves and other pro-Palestinian symbols without any reaction." Indeed. Perhaps they should be awarded the Nobel Prize.

MR. SPOCK, GENOCIDAL MANIAC: "The media ... does not really accept or show Muslims ... as part of American society.... You do not see us in 'Star Trek.' 'Star Trek' is set 2,000 years or so in the future. Are you telling us that when machines will be able to have feelings and half-man half-wolf will be able to have love affairs with human beings, people like me will be extinct? So that is like cultural genocide that Hollywood conducts."—Imran Anwar, "Middle East analyst," FOX NEWS CHANNEL, April 6 (Thanks to *OpinionJournal.com*.)

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MISLEADING HEADLINE OF THE WEEK: "CAPITALS ARE CONSIDERING A MOVE TO NEW JERSEY: The Washington Capitals [hockey franchise] are strongly considering adding a redesigned jersey for next season...."—*The Washington Post*, April 4 (Thanks to Morgan Heavener.) ■

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Alexander Cockburn's dubious theories.

Relativity Theory

By FRANKLIN FOER

ALEXANDER COCKBURN ISN'T a big fan of Israel. The Irish expat's column for *The Nation*, "Beat the Devil," regularly trashes the Zionist entity. Among his typical criticisms: Israel's American supporters are "the spiritual soul-mates of those fanatical Cuban exiles"; Ariel Sharon's "credentials as a war criminal are robust"; the occupation of the Palestinians amounts to genocide. You'd have to read deep into the pages of *The Final Call* or Arabic-language papers to find writers who can match Cockburn's level of anti-Israel virulence.

But Cockburn's home, *The Nation*, has always considered itself a bastion of cosmopolitanism. Even if it's not exactly the Anti-Defamation League's house publication, it has long chastised anti-Semites on the left—proponents of what it calls the "socialism of fools." (In recent years, for example, it published an attack on Louis Farrakhan and condemnations of CCNY Professor Leonard Jeffries.) And Cockburn has had his moments too. In the 1980s he discovered that the conservative writer Joseph Sobran had a history of publishing boorish pieces about Jews. A few years later he trashed Lech Walesa for indulging in crude stereotyping of Jews. "Vile sentiments," he called them.

Anyone who visits Cockburn's left-wing newsletter, *CounterPunch*, however, will learn that Cockburn isn't immune from spreading—if not quite explicitly endorsing—such vile sentiments himself. Take his March 12 piece (partially reprinted in *The Seattle Times*) on the newly released tapes of conversations between Richard Nixon and the Reverend Billy Graham in which the good reverend gripes about Jewish control of the media.

At first, Cockburn seems critical of Graham's sentiment, sneering that it is prevalent at "75 percent of the country clubs in America, not to mention many a Baptist soiree." But just sentences later, Cockburn seems to affirm the view himself:

> It's supposedly the third rail in journalism even to have a discussion of how much the Jews do control the media. Since three of the prime founders of Hollywood, were Polish Jews who grew up within fifty miles of each other in Galicia, it's reckoned as not so utterly beyond the bounds of propriety to talk about Jewish power in Hollywood, though people still stir uneasily. The economic and political commentator Jude Wanniski remarked last week in his web newsletter that even if the Jews don't control the media overall, it is certainly true to say that they control discussion of Israel in the media here.

Cockburn follows with this:

> Certainly, there are a number of stories sloshing around the news now that have raised discussions of Israel and of the posture of American Jews to an acrid level. The purveyor of anthrax may have been a former government scientist, Jewish, with a record of baiting a colleague of Arab origins, and with the intent to blame the anthrax on Muslim terrorists. Rocketing around the web and spilling into the press are many stories about Israeli spies in America at the time of 9/11. On various accounts, they were trailing [Mohammed] Atta and his associates, knew what was going to happen but did nothing about it, or were simply spying on US facilities. Some, posing as art students have been expelled, according to AP.

To be fair, Cockburn doesn't *exactly* endorse these theories. Rather, by noting that all of these Jewish conspiracy stories are "sloshing around the news," Cockburn seems merely to be pointing out that, hey, anti-Semitic ideas are still out there today—so why the shock that Graham endorsed them 30 years ago? Indeed, when I reached Cockburn to ask him about these conspiracies, he insisted he was just reporting what was already in circulation. "I don't think I said they are true. I don't know there's enough exterior evidence to determine whether they are true or not."

But, of course, that last sentence is the giveaway. There most certainly is enough exterior evidence to determine whether the stories are true or not. The answer is that they are not. They are wild rumors circulating, if at all, in some of the least credible corners of the Internet. No respectable media outlet has given these stories credence. Merely by stating that these ideas are in circulation, merely by saying it's impossible to judge their veracity, Cockburn confers these ideas with legitimacy.

Consider, for example, the story about the mad Jew scientists out to ruin the Muslims. I searched for it on the Lexis-Nexis news database but came up with nothing—not one single mention of the story in a mainstream news outlet. And I only found it on the Web at an obscure, far-far left site that refers to the United States as "gringoland" and accuses Daniel Pearl of working for Mossad. (Note the similarity of the Jewish anthrax rumor to the Nation of Islam creation myth about the wicked chemist Yacub.)

Then there's Cockburn's talk about Mossad's complicity in 9/11. Of course, this version of events can also be found in the self-exculpatory pages of the Arab press. But to my knowledge, Cockburn is the only prominent Western journalist to give these slanderous stories any credence.

And what about the Associated Press (AP) story he cites? It quotes from a 61-page Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) report suggesting the Israeli art students' travels through the United States "may well be an organized intelligence-gathering." But the AP also quotes the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as saying "the bureau also has investigated and is satisfied that the young people were not involved in espionage or intelligence gathering." The FBI insists that the Israelis were deported merely for selling over-priced paintings door-to-door in violation of their visas. And even if you accepted the DEA's vague intimations of espionage, there's nothing to suggest the Israeli connection to 9/11 that Cockburn posits. The linkage is the product of

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Preventing Future Enrons

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Harry Roundell is President of Decision Insights, Inc.

How corporations are managed, not who manages them, is the cause of business fraud. The public, the president, and the media focus on the venality of a handful of executives at Enron as the explanation for that company's collapse. Certainly anyone found guilty of violating the law should be punished, but bringing those individuals to justice alone will not stymie future fraud any more than bringing Osama bin Laden to justice will end terrorism. **We need to address the causes, not just the symptoms, of fraud.** Fraud never arises simply because of greed; it arises because some corporate governance arrangements give executives incentives to misreport performance in hopes of saving their company's reputation.

Research shows that the chances that a company will commit fraud can be predicted two years in advance. An accounting-fraud analysis, for instance, correctly predicted that Sunbeam, Rite Aid, Cendant, Informix, and Medaphis—to mention just a few cases—were at the highest risk of alleged fraud. It also identified Enron as a high-risk company in the mid-1990s. Of the 4 percent of firms classified as highest risk, 54 percent have subsequently been accused of fraud; that number jumps to 67 percent if a firm reached the highest risk classification more than once.

The fraud classification system relies on publicly available information, focusing on the incentives directors have to engage in oversight. It can help protect shareholders from fraud and enable boards of directors to restructure firms so that executives have the right performance incentives. Every company is organized around a controlling group that determines policies regarding the allocation of resources and the selection and retention of executives. The power of this group is used to predict leadership's actions.

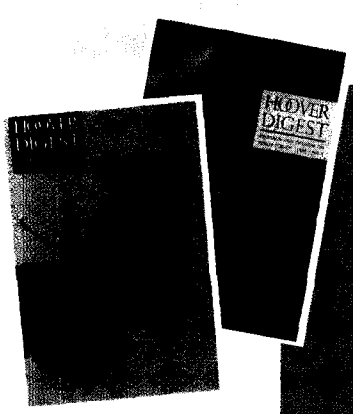
Companies offer two basic categories of rewards: those that benefit shareholders and those that benefit select groups involved with the company. The mix of benefits offered in these two categories—shareholder benefits and insider benefits—makes the risk of fraud predictable.

The mix in senior management's compensation between rewards tied directly to performance (e.g., stock options) and personal rewards tied to its role in the company (e.g., personal salaries) influences its performance on behalf of shareholders. Likewise, the number of people involved in the day-to-day administration of a company influences the extent to which those individuals identify with the management team or with shareholder goals. Generally, the greater the focus on insider benefits to senior management, the higher the risk of fraud; the greater the political clout of senior management relative to external directors, the higher the risk of fraud; and the greater the commitment to stock options and benefits that encourage a long-term view, oversight, and balance between the influence of management and the board of directors, the lower the risk of fraud.

When auditors review governance structures and books, and are encouraged to consult with their clients about problems in the incentive structures, we will have come a long way toward eliminating fraud. Confidence in business requires that we move in these directions rather than putting our energies into finding greedy individuals to blame for what are manifestly corporate governance problems.

— Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Harry Roundell

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University



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Cockburn's imagination.

Cockburn's column goes way beyond legitimate criticism of Israel. It's akin to the rantings of pitchfork Pat Buchanan, whose anti-Semitism *The Nation* has condemned. So you would expect the magazine to take a tough stance on the anti-Semitism in its own backyard. But when I asked *The Nation*'s editor, Katrina vanden Heuvel, about Cockburn, she could only lamely distance herself from the piece: "This didn't appear in *The Nation*. I don't read *CounterPunch*.... It's been our experience that we've had differences with our writers. It's a strength of the magazine that it accommodates a range of perspectives." True enough. But there are some perspectives that shouldn't be accommodated. ■

Nablus Dispatch

Halftime

By JOSHUA HAMMER *and* ELIZABETH RUBIN

"ALL RESIDENTS SURRENDER immediately because the army of Israel has surrounded the whole area," intoned a voice over the megaphone in thickly accented classic Arabic. "Anybody protecting an armed person, the hand of the Israeli Defense Forces is capable of reaching you. Your life...," and then the Israeli soldier's voice stopped. Silence filled the old stone houses in the casbah packed around Al Nasr (Victory) Mosque. Then came the voice again, moving through the alleys: "This is the time of surrendering. All people carrying guns, you are surrounded." Moments later two Palestinian men emerged on a road overlooking the old town, white bands of surrender wrapped around their foreheads. Israeli soldiers raced back up the steep road, shouting, *"Taftish, taftish"*—"Search, search"—as other soldiers in their unit led out two other men, in bathrobes, their hands bound with plastic handcuffs.

The battle of Nablus has been going on for nearly one week, and Israeli soldiers have steadily driven back Palestinian guerrillas from the alleyways of the old casbah. As they have, the strategy behind Ariel Sharon's Operation Defensive Shield—Israel's largest military operation since the Six Day War—has come into view. It looks increasingly like a premeditated strategy aimed at wiping out the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the armed wing of Yasir Arafat's Fatah organization. And in large measure it is succeeding.

That's not to say Al Aqsa is the only terrorist group in Israel's sights. In Jenin, which gained infamy last year as the suicide-bombing capital of the West Bank, the army's prime target is Islamic Jihad, whose fighters have declared that they will die before surrendering, leading an Israeli general to call Jenin the "Masada of the Palestinians." By contrast, the group that seems to be best weathering the onslaught is Hamas. (Which is not to say the group has suffered no losses—several of its leaders have been killed.) Hamas is taking fewer casualties because, unlike the Tanzim guerrillas—who seem to revel in their notoriety and were relatively easy to locate—Hamas remains a secretive and dispersed organization less identifiable to Israeli intelligence. Whereas Al Aqsa fighters parade with their weapons displayed and their faces uncovered, members of Hamas are more private and, during the current attack, have gone deep underground. What's more, Israel has in the past relied heavily on Palestinian Preventive Security to root out and arrest Hamas militants—an unlikely alliance now that links between the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) and Israel appear irreparably severed. All of which underscores the irony of Israel's offensive: In destroying Arafat's terrorist network, they may give Hamas a freer hand.

THIS WEEK ISRAELI forces cornered Al Aqsa fighters in Nablus's Al Yasmina, a tiny quarter of ancient stone buildings accessible only through a series of tunnel-like passageways lined—in preparation for an Israeli attack—with unexploded pipe bombs and barricades of sand-filled dumpsters. The streets of the old city have been thoroughly trashed: Apache helicopters have turned two- and three-story buildings into piles of rubble, and water sprays from broken mains. Once-cobblestoned streets, churned up by tank treads, are now seas of mud. Store facades have been peeled away, leaving shoes, men's suits, and women's embroidered dresses suspended on their racks as if at an open-air market. Palestinian families peer through their window bars, hopeful that the sight of journalists walking the streets means the end of their siege. Two women, balancing on what was left of the landing of their second-floor apartment and framed by their collapsing roof, wires, and pipes, beckoned us in for coffee. As smoke billowed above the rooftops near the turquoise-domed Al Nasr Mosque, a woman surrounded by three kids asked us if we could find her husband, brother, and 18-year-old son, all of whom had been seized from their home three days earlier and herded into a nearby girls' school along with scores of other men who've surrendered or been arrested.

Most of the remaining fighters are now hiding out in the ancient buildings of Nablus. Previous Israeli incursions into West Bank towns had concentrated on the refugee camps where the Brigades were born and where they enjoy their strongest popular support. And so fighters knew they could take refuge in the centers of West Bank cities, such as Nablus's old city and Bethlehem's Manger Square, believing that the Israelis would respect their cultural and economic importance. As recently as one month ago you could find Ibrahim Ebayat, leader of Bethlehem's Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and his gang of gunmen hanging out around the Church of the Nativity, boasting that "the Israelis would never dare come into this area—it would be a propaganda defeat for them in front of the world." And indeed, four weeks ago when Israeli tanks entered Bethlehem, they refrained

JOSHUA HAMMER, Jerusalem bureau chief for *Newsweek*, is writing a book about Bethlehem during the intifada. ELIZABETH RUBIN covered the war in Afghanistan for THE NEW REPUBLIC.

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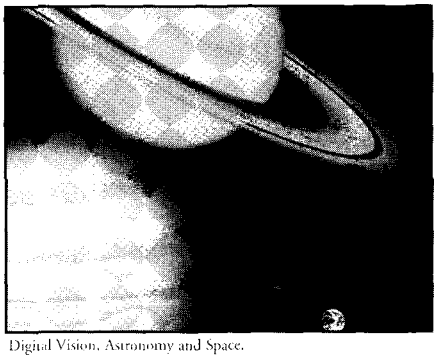

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from invading the old part of the city, emboldening Ebayat's forces. But this time Ebayat and his men—along with fighters in Nablus and Ramallah—fell into what looks like an Israeli trap. Tanks, armored personnel carriers, snipers, and infantrymen have caged the guerrillas into each of these sites—Manger Square in Bethlehem, the casbah in Nablus, and Al Manara Square in Ramallah. "The Israelis played it smart," says one Palestinian journalist. "All the gunmen from Fatah fell into the trap. They have killed many of the leaders, and many of the rest are surrounded."

Among the key Al Aqsa leaders to fall was Nasser Awais, from the Balata Camp near Nablus, a charismatic commander in the P.A.'s security force who trained as a policeman in Iraq and returned to live in the West Bank after the 1994 Oslo peace accords. After he founded the Al Aqsa Brigades last year, he repeatedly defied Arafat's demands for complete obedience (reportedly calling him a "motherfucker" in public) and criticized his corruption. Arafat stopped paying his salary, and Awais responded by ignoring Arafat's demands for a cease-fire last December—earning himself a spot on Israel's ten-most-wanted list. A few days ago he was killed in Nablus's casbah. Israeli military sources claim he strapped a bomb belt to his waist and jumped on a tank. But, says the Palestinian journalist, "he is the Godfather of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and they would never sacrifice him. He probably got caught in a bomb." Ebayat, meanwhile, is trapped inside the Church of Nativity, surrounded by Israeli tanks and snipers. The once ubiquitous Marwan Barghouti, considered by Israeli intelligence to be the military leader of the Brigades, vanished from his headquarters in Ramallah nearly two weeks ago and has been in hiding ever since. "The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades are in a state of denial," says a Palestinian analyst from Jerusalem we talked to in Nablus. "After this incursion, they will be completely paralyzed, and I don't think Fatah wants to restart them."

On Monday evening Israeli shooting died down enough for the guerrillas, who had been immobilized for days by heavy bombardment, to evacuate the ten dead and roughly 30 wounded who had been lying on the floor of a mosque commandeered as a field hospital in Nablus's casbah. The fighters carried them through the stone archways that led from the casbah to Martyrs' Square, where they were collected by Red Crescent ambulances—the only moving vehicles in the town besides TV cars and tanks. Outside the hospital today a shopkeeper named Mahannad, who said he'd raced to the old town when he heard the Israelis were coming and picked up the machine gun of a dead fighter, claimed that he and dozens of other civilians were using borrowed pistols and AK-47s to defend their town from Israeli invasion. "They [the Israelis] are trying to get people to shoot every last round they have," he said, conceding that resistance in the old city has been overwhelmed. In the future, he said, "the resistance will be there, but it won't be active. We know we will need it again."

The huge number of deaths and widespread destruction caused by the Israeli army may indeed have routed Al Aqsa, as Sharon hoped. But it could also spawn a wave of new martyrs eager to join Hamas, which has apparently gone underground for the duration. "Hamas gets its strength from oppression and misery," says the Palestinian source in Nablus. "Before the invasion, if there were ten people willing to be suicide bombers, now they're waiting in line. Hamas has to turn them away." Nevertheless, the Palestinian people, no matter how defiant, are exhausted, their resources depleted, their infrastructure bombed. And so it may indeed be, as Mahannad said, a time of hibernation for the Palestinian resistance. ■

The French rewrite 9/11.

Plot Development

By Max Berley

"The official version is only propaganda.... What caused the explosion at the Pentagon? What became of American Airlines Flight 77? Are the passengers dead? If so, who killed them, and why? Otherwise, where are they? These are the questions the American administration must answer."

Which country spawned these conspiratorial rantings about September 11? Syria? Saudi Arabia? Iraq? No; the paranoid fantasy above is extracted not from the state-sponsored media of some virulently anti-American dictatorship, but from a book being snatched up like *petits pains* by our purported allies: the French. *The Dreadful Imposture*, by left-wing activist Thierry Meyssan, is a thin—and thinly argued—volume that claims the Pentagon was struck not by an airplane but by a truck bomb planted by rogue U.S. military officers. It calls Osama bin Laden a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) stooge and suggests that 9/11 was the culmination of a long-planned military-industrial complex coup to justify a dramatic increase in defense spending and an invasion of Afghanistan. How seriously are the French taking Meyssan's theories? His book has sold over 100,000 copies. And last week it became the country's number-one nonfiction best-seller.

Here, briefly, is the evidence upon which Meyssan's theory rests: There are no images of an aircraft striking the Pentagon, and the images of the alleged crash site show no wreckage from a plane. Yet if, as the Pentagon claims, the nose of Flight 77 entered the first few rings of the building, parts of the fuselage and the wings should have been strewn across the lawn. All this is, in a literal sense, true: No photos have been published showing the plane striking the Pentagon and, because Flight 77 virtually disintegrated on impact, there was very little identifiable plane wreckage. Which might raise legitimate questions, had numerous eyewitnesses not seen the crash. To Meyssan, however, the eyewitnesses simply

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Why is the United States a Bystander to Genocide?

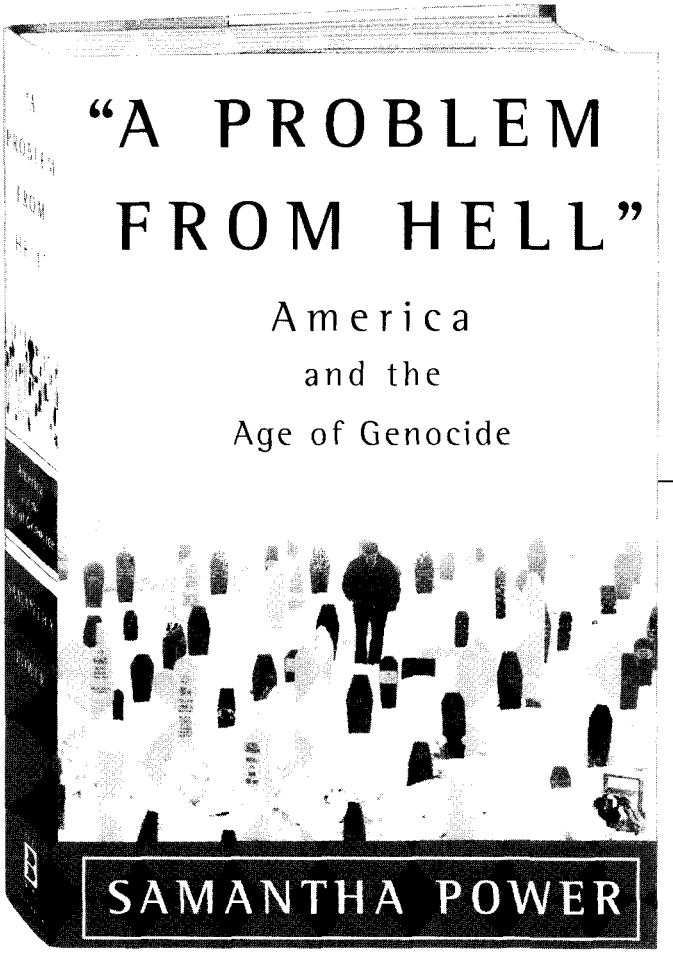

photo: Tsar Fedorsky

"This vivid and gripping work of American history doubles as a prosecutor's brief." —Laura Secor, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

"Anyone who wants to understand why America has permanently entered a new era in international relations must read *A Problem from Hell*...**vividly written and thoroughly researched."** —Jacob Heilbrunn, LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK REVIEW

"Magisterial... Though clearly imbued with a sense of outrage, Power is judicious in her portraits of those who oppose intervention, and keenly aware of the perils and costs of military action. Her indictment of U.S. policy is therefore all the more damning." —THE NEW YORKER

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reveal the extent of the cover-up. "Notwithstanding the respect we owe to the high quality of the 'eyewitnesses,' officers and legislators, it is impossible to swallow such nonsense," Meyssan writes. "Far from lending credit to their testimony, the quality [i.e., high status] of these witnesses only underlines the importance of the means deployed by the United States Army to disguise the truth." Meyssan goes on to speculate that the government planted beacons in the World Trade Center to help the other two planes reach their targets and planted explosives at the base of the towers to ensure their collapse. In his opinion, bin Laden, a longtime CIA operative and friend of the Bush family, cooperated in the plot. What motivated all this deception? The military-industrial complex (the same people, Meyssan notes, who killed John F. Kennedy) needed a pretext to mount a "colonial expedition" into Afghanistan to secure an oil pipeline through Central Asia and to impose martial law in the United States and dominate the world.

Meyssan first posted his "revelations" on the Internet almost immediately after September 11, where they quickly followed the arc of all successful Web hoaxes, their diffusion growing exponentially through word of mouth, links, and e-mails. The French press noted the theory, but mainly as an Internet *phénomène*. But when Meyssan began appearing on television to promote the book version of his argument—published in late March by Editions Carnot, an obscure publishing house specializing in outlandish conspiracy theories—the country's most prominent newspapers and magazines began devoting hundreds of column inches to shooting it down. "As the controversy gathered steam, my editors kept insisting that I write something about it," says Pascal Riché, Washington bureau chief of the leftist newspaper *Libération*. "I was dragging my feet and there was a debate with the newsroom over whether this was worthy of being debunked." Ultimately the book's popularity forced Riché and many other prominent French journalists to weigh in. And of course, in taking Meyssan on, they gave his views wider distribution. Jean-Bernard Cadier, Washington bureau chief for Europe 1, the largest news and talk radio network in France, recalls the Alice-in-Wonderland quality of a TV panel he appeared on with five other mainstream journalists—and Meyssan. "We were six against him, and I'm sure we lost," he said. "He's not using the same weapons we are."

One reason Meyssan's views have been taken seriously is that he does not have a prior reputation as a nut. As head of Reseau Voltaire, a hitherto respectable organization devoted to promoting civil liberties, he has scored some worthy journalistic coups with investigations of Opus Dei and the far-right National Front; and he has earned a well-established place within the mainstream left with his campaigns for gay rights and the separation of church and state.

But there are deeper reasons, which have their roots in French culture. The unimaginable terrorist attacks, the French sociologist Pierre Lagrange has said, confronted people with a reality so close to science fiction that it sparked a flowering of "revisionist" or paranoid interpretations similar to those that arose after the Holocaust, the Kennedy assassination, and the moon landing. Meyssan, who in addition to his rabid anti-Americanism clearly suffers from a very French propensity toward excessive rationalism, went out in search of a theory that in strict logical terms "makes sense." His approach to the improbable truth of what happened on September 11 resembles the one taken by a French engineer who traveled to Britain in the early 1800s to inspect the newly developed steam locomotive. According to a story that has become part of French legend, he watched it pass before him on a short length of track, took out a pad and paper, did a series of calculations, and announced: "*Ça ne marche pas.*"

But of course, the primary reason for Meyssan's celebrity is the insatiable appetite many in France have for things anti-American. Although recent polls show that strong anti-American feelings only resonate with between 10 percent and 15 percent of respondents—roughly the same percentage of the population drawn to extremist political parties on the right and left—the book's popularity suggests that the number of people willing to entertain anti-American theories is far higher. After an initial outpouring of sympathy, the perceived unilateralism of America's response to September 11 has lifted the lid on long-simmering resentments stemming from France's reduced presence in geopolitics and a fear of American "hyperpower" (in the phrase of French foreign minister Hubert Védrine). "It's a reaction to the events," says Cadier. "The empathy has been transformed into the feeling that the U.S. is taking advantage of the situation to throw its weight around." In fact, no pretext is now too petty to justify anti-American paranoia. When *Amélie* failed to win an Oscar, some commentators claimed it was payback for France's resistance to war against Iraq. When a madman killed eight people in late March in a suburb of Paris, a presidential candidate at the scene called the rampage a pathology "à l'Americaine." Some in France have even suggested that Meyssan's book itself is a CIA plot to discredit French resistance to American hegemony. If so, the plot is working very nicely indeed. ■

London Dispatch

Home Base

By Tim Luckhurst

Correspondents who watched Tony Blair at his joint press conference with President George W. Bush from inside Crawford High School's flag-decked gym last weekend say he looked uncharacteristically nervous. And with good cause. The British prime minister's job is threatened—and not just for the reasons Americans suppose. The revolt within his party against his support for American military action against Iraq has made headlines in the United States.

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But in fact, opposition to Blair's pro-U.S. foreign policy is less the cause of his current troubles than their symptom. The deeper problem for the standard-bearer of New Labour is that he was elected to fix Britain's crumbling state-run bureaucracies. And so far, he hasn't.

First, Iraq. Already, almost 150 members of Parliament, most of them Labour, have signed a House of Commons motion expressing "deep unease" about possible British involvement in an American-led action against Saddam Hussein. In fact, the ongoing rebellion in Labour's ranks bracketed Blair's excursion to Texas. Just before leaving, he summoned his secretary of state for international development, Clare Short, for a tense showdown at Downing Street. In a March 17 TV interview with the BBC, she had strongly hinted that if British forces participated in a campaign to topple Saddam, she would resign. Blair reminded her of the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility, under which ministers are required to abide by the policies of the Cabinet as a whole, not their own consciences. But many of Short's Cabinet colleagues share her view. At a Cabinet meeting just ten days earlier, several other senior members—including Home Secretary David Blunkett and former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook—had made their own unease about British support for U.S. strategy luminously clear.

Then, as the prime minister flew home on Monday morning, his former defense minister, Peter Kilfoyle, toured the breakfast radio studios to advertise his opinion that Iraq was a matter for the United Nations, not Downing Street and the White House. Last weekend actress-turned-politician Glenda Jackson, herself a former minister in Blair's government, called Blair's Iraq policy "irresponsible" and declared that Labour should focus "on what is already happening in the Middle East"—reflecting the view of many Labour MPs that Blair should pressure Israel and Ariel Sharon, not Saddam. The dissent was near-universal: Even Lord Healey, the venerable former chancellor of the exchequer and one of Labour's elder statesmen, lumbered briefly out of retirement to warn against an attack on Iraq.

But it was Labour MP Gwyneth Dunwoody, veteran chair of the powerful Select Committee on Transport, who launched the most telling attack on her prime minister. With blunt clarity Dunwoody declared that the prime minister was "swinging from all points of the compass." And with those words, she connected the prime minister's Iraq problems to his deeper ones at home.

Blair's popularity rating, which as recently as last year stood at 93 percent, has fallen to below 50 percent. More alarmingly, a late March opinion poll in *The Guardian* has shown Labour's lead over the Conservatives down to just seven points, the lowest margin since Labour won power in 1997. It has been, in the words of one bravely anonymous Labour legislator, "the worst of times."

And the primary reason isn't Iraq. It's that when it comes to the core public services Blair was elected to reform, the electorate believes things have gotten worse, not better. The same poll revealed that only 29 percent of Labour voters believe public services have improved since Blair became prime minister. Small wonder. The National Health Service

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THE WASHINGTON POST

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is staggering under a burden of long waiting lists and historic underinvestment. The railway network, incompetently privatized by the Conservatives and still less competently partially renationalized by Labour, is inefficient, plagued by strikes, and seemingly incapable of delivering commuters to work. Standards in state schools are in decline, and teachers are threatening to make things worse by striking for shorter hours and higher pay. Meanwhile the Post Office, teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, openly admits its inability to provide expected levels of service.

TONY BLAIR HAS never been entirely comfortable with the party he leads. In his first campaign, he was able to persuade it to set aside its traditional loyalty to state funding and state management of public services in order to win power—this was, after all, what made New Labour new. But Blair never really changed his party's core beliefs. Labour MPs tolerated his embrace of the free market—and corollary distancing from their beloved socialism—only because they thought it would *work*, that improved public services would keep Labour MPs safe in their seats and public employees safe in their jobs. So far, neither has happened: Blair's Third Way has failed to deliver effective reform, while at the same time sparking bitter resentment among the very people who run the party at the local level.

Indeed, Blair appears incapable of deciding whether public service workers—teachers, doctors, train drivers, etc.—are the solution to his problems or the cause. Sometimes he insults them, calling them "wreckers" or talking about the "scars on my back" inflicted by the battle to reform public services. To Labour supporters, Blair resembles a political chameleon, still unsure whether he is most comfortable on the market or the statist wing of Britain's traditional political divide. When the railways fail, he renationalizes strategic management of the network. When schools show no signs of improving, as in the London Borough of Camden, he replaces state employees with commercial managers. His solution to the urgent need for new hospitals is to invite the private sector to build them. But when the recently privatized National Air Traffic Control System faced bankruptcy, he rushed in to rescue it with state subsidies—making a mockery of his Third Way principles. Often, his loyalties seem determined less by any principle at all than by his need to court two different types of Labour Party donors: the big unions—which want renationalization—and private-sector entrepreneurs like the Hinduja brothers, Lakshmi Mittal, and Bernie Ecclestone, whose business interests have led to allegations of influence-buying.

Labour strategists are panic-stricken by mounting evidence that the party will lose badly in crucial local government elections on May 2. The mighty UNISON—which represents local government staff—has bought newspaper advertisements to publicize their visceral hostility to Blair's introduction of private-sector finance and management into historically state-run sectors of the British economy. Indeed, things have gotten so bad for Blair that on March 23 the nation woke up to an astonishing story in *The Guardian*. The paper's widely respected political editor, Michael White, revealed that "a hardcore of leftwing Labour MPs are privately pressing for some form of public challenge to Blair's leadership." White went on to explain that some Labour legislators were keen to nominate an alternative leader in the hope that by precipitating a contest they might persuade a serious contender, perhaps the ambitious chancellor of the exchequer, Gordon Brown, to realize their dream of deposing Blair.

In reality, there will be no challenge—yet. Chancellor Brown and Home Secretary Blunkett are the only plausible contenders, and neither is ready to betray the man who elevated him to Cabinet rank. But Blair knows that Brown and Blunkett are much closer to Labour's traditional values than he will ever be. And in putting his authority on the line in support of Bush's Iraq strategy, the prime minister may be supplying the catalyst that accelerates a political divorce made inevitable by domestic dissatisfaction.

"Tony only enjoys power if it enables him to do what he believes is right," says one close ally of the prime minister. "He believes Bush is right about Iraq. If his party obstructs him, he is quite capable of walking away. He is not a machine politician. If he can't achieve his own objectives, which are often not Labour's objectives, then he has a young family to enjoy."

Blair resign? Not this month. But the gap between Labour and its leader has never been greater. And Blair only widens it by concentrating on foreign policy at the expense of his sputtering domestic agenda. The taunt thrown his way by everyone from Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith to Labour's newly powerful left is that he has hardly been in Britain since September 11. And whatever good it may accomplish, toppling Saddam will not make the trains run on time. ■

Too bad Barry didn't run.

End Run

By MICHAEL SCHAFFER

WHEN MARION BARRY announced last week that he was ending his brief run for Council of the District of Columbia, Washington's political class breathed a sigh of relief. And why not? In barely one month, the 66-year-old former mayor proved he hadn't lost a step when it came to polarizing voters: First he listed restoring the council's black majority as a reason for running. Then he faced new drug accusations after police discovered trace amounts of crack cocaine in his Jaguar. As he pulled out of the race—two days after his wife left him—Barry blamed his troubles on a familiar bogey: the police-media conspiracy. No wonder so many locals feel they've been spared a divi-

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sive, nasty election season.

They're probably right. But Barry's departure also denies the city something even more important: an opportunity to defeat the former mayor at the polls and thereby unshackle the District from his legacy. Politicians still tremble when Barry begins his biannual comeback flirtations (this is the third straight election in which he's played footsie with a run). But if they'd spent less time looking over their shoulders and more time looking over election returns, they'd have seen that Barry was likely heading for a poleaxing when he called it quits. Which would have provided just the kind of political closure the city needs.

THE NUMBERS TELL the story. Washington has changed profoundly since Barry's 1980s heyday. The African American share of the city's population has fallen from 70 percent to 60 percent, as 100,000 black residents—many of them the poor and lower-middle-class voters who gave Barry his biggest majorities—have left town, mostly for the suburbs. Since Barry's last campaign—his election as mayor in 1994—gentrification has swept eastward through neighborhoods once dominated by middle-class black families. And onetime war zones across the Anacostia River have seen public housing replaced with mixed-income developments. In the process, the mundane concerns of property owners have replaced symbolic grievances and big-government fixes as D.C.'s dominant political discourse. No surprise, then, that candidates preaching to the alienated have been wiped out in every election since. In the 1998 mayoral race, Anthony Williams, a budget-balancing, Ivy League-educated darling of affluent reformists, thumped a self-proclaimed populist. That same year—probably the first in which four of the city's eight political wards had white voting pluralities (no one knows for sure)—the city council gained its first-ever white majority.

The change was illustrated even more dramatically in 2000, when Williams orchestrated a referendum on replacing Washington's school board, the city's first democratically elected body, with a partially appointed board. In the old days the proposal would likely have been crushed by the guardians of home rule, playing on the emotional appeals Barry specialized in. True to form, those guardians called the measure an assault on the civil-rights-era struggle for local democracy. When the election returns came in, however, the measure carried by 51 percent. A map showing the precinct-by-precinct outcome scanned like a racial map of Washington: White areas voted yes, black areas no.

All of which means that, had he run, Barry likely would have lost. In Ward 8—Washington's poorest, and Barry's base—large pockets of poverty still exist; but new, private tract houses stand where housing projects once crumbled. "These are different people who are there now," says H.R. Crawford, a former council member and local property developer. "They feel like they're going places. They're not so much the alienated people." (A couple years back the chief executive of neighboring Prince George's County, Maryland, even accused D.C. of exporting its poor to his jurisdiction.) Barry may still represent a life-size rebuke to cops, prosecutors, and other representatives of the white power structure, but fewer voters—black as well as white—now rate such a rebuke as priority number one. Crawford thinks Barry still would have carried the ward this time, but without anything like the dominant 82 percent of the vote he won against two major Democratic candidates in 1994. And if Barry couldn't dominate Ward 8, he couldn't carry the city.

BUT D.C. NEVER got a chance to find that out. Which means that Barry remains the Augusto Pinochet of city politics—out of office but never beaten. As a consequence, the people who replaced him walk on eggshells, kissing Barry's ring and praising his leadership. Even Phil Mendelson—the nerdy white liberal Barry had planned to challenge this year—turned out at the former mayor's birthday party the night Barry declared his candidacy. To this day, D.C. pols call Barry "the mayor."

Williams, who ran as a tough-as-nails reformer, is palpably hesitant on matters of race and class. The uncertainty ranges from the symbolic—he famously punished a staffer for using the word "niggardly" in 1999—to the substantive, like his uncertain flip-flops on relocating the city's heavily black public university, a move that was panned by critics as elitist. Williams's nervousness might seem strange given that he beat his nearest opponent by 15 percent last time. But it's more understandable when you realize that Williams has never beaten the one guy who counts.

Indeed, where Barry is concerned, his successor has been especially eager to please. Williams has steered city development funds to a community tennis center project led by Barry's wife. He faces a fund-raising scandal that stems in part from a prayer breakfast designed to stroke ministers who were a staple of Barry's coalition. And last week Williams quickly made amends after the former mayor—who insists he's clean and sober—took umbrage at the mayor's suggestion that he seek help after his police run-in. "I want to applaud the mayor," Williams told reporters after Barry left the race. "He represents a lot of people in this city who feel alienated."

And it's precisely those alienated folks Barry was supposed to represent who would have benefited most from his trouncing at the polls and from the ascent of more competent advocates. In a skyrocketing housing market, poor people's concerns should be a potent political issue in Washington. But the Barry era's ineptitude, corruption, and racial demagoguery have long sucked the oxygen from the political left. With Barry speaking for the vulnerable, it's impossible to form the coalitions necessary to win in the new D.C. Unlike any other candidate in a city that's still relatively liberal, he begins any campaign with half of the voters dead set against him.

If Barry—who planned to campaign against gentrification, an issue he barely touched as mayor—had run and lost, it might have forced would-be defenders of the poor to find a new leader. It might have forced them to answer for the incompetence that torpedoed the anti-poverty agenda he championed. It might even have forced them to find a new way to talk about the politics of rich and poor, which candidate Barry addressed only in the most hackneyed racial

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terms. But that didn't happen. And it won't for a while. "I will continue to speak out and speak up for those whose causes I care so deeply about," Barry said as he left the race last week. And if that desire leads him to run again, no one will be able to remind him that he got whupped the last time around. ■

The real 9/11 civil liberties problem.

Under Charge

By JOSH GERSTEIN

LAST MONTH, COLIN POWELL unveiled the State Department's annual report on human rights. Not surprisingly, the report faults authoritarian regimes such as China, Iraq, and North Korea for imprisoning people without charge and for holding legal proceedings in secret. What it neglects to mention is that in the past year those two practices have also become widespread in the United States.

Take the case of Anwar Almirabi, a 28-year-old Saudi Arabian auto-parts exporter who has lived in Texas for the last eight years. On September 13 he was arrested for a visa violation and was told he'd be released in a few days. His lawyer acknowledges that Almirabi briefly overstayed his visa but says it was to tend to his American wife, who encountered complications while giving birth to their son in August. Since spouses of U.S. citizens are normally entitled to live and work in this country, Almirabi's visa issue should have been easily resolved. And it probably would have been had federal prosecutors not declared him a "material witness." After Almirabi spent a couple of months in county jails in Texas, federal marshals moved him to a federal prison in Chicago where he's spent most of the last seven months in solitary confinement—with no public explanation of the grounds for his continuing incarceration.

Almirabi is not alone. In last fall's anti-terrorism legislation, civil libertarians succeeded in placing a seven-day limit on the detention of foreigners without charge. But the Justice Department has made a mockery of that protection by turning again and again to a federal statute known as the material-witness law to arrest people and keep them locked up (often for months) without charging them with any criminal offense. In contrast with most judicial proceedings, the material-witness cases have been handled behind closed doors. The attorneys involved have been effectively gagged. In sum, the Justice Department has quietly used a little-known law to alter the fundamental balance between the power of law enforcement and the rights of the accused—with virtually no public debate.

Although U.S. law has allowed prosecutors to detain recalcitrant witnesses since 1789, the current material-witness statute, passed in 1984, was little used until the World Trade Center fell. In those instances where it had been deployed, it was typically against people who witnessed a specific crime and then fled or became uncooperative. The government also used it occasionally in alien smuggling cases. But the statute is vaguely written, permitting detention if it is deemed "necessary to prevent a failure of justice." And so since September 11, the material-witness mechanism has become a favorite tool of government attorneys—even when the person in question has offered to cooperate and has made no effort to flee. "A rarely used procedural device was used in a wholesale fashion," says Sean O'Shea, a former federal prosecutor hired by the Saudi government to represent several detainees. O'Shea acknowledges that the government's use of the law in the chaotic first days after the attack was legitimate, but says it has been gradually expanded to include people whose connection to any specific crime is nebulous at best. "They really stretched the definition of material witness to the breaking point," he says.

The Justice Department refuses to reveal the number of so-called witnesses it has jailed, but news accounts estimate the number at more than two dozen; and given the strict secrecy imposed in these cases, it's possible the real figure is much higher. These alleged witnesses have fewer rights than people who have actually been charged with breaking the law. Their court hearings are almost always conducted in secret. They are often kept in solitary confinement with little or no access to phones or visitors. They have no right to a speedy trial or, for that matter, to any trial at all. A lawyer for one of the alleged witnesses jokes darkly, "He'd be better off if he was a serial killer."

One reason the material-witness mechanism is so attractive to prosecutors is that it requires little more than suspicion to get a person arrested. "It's the only way, outside of immigration authority, that the government can lock up someone without establishing probable cause to believe they committed a criminal offense," says Georgetown Law Professor David Cole, a prominent critic of the Justice Department's policy toward the detainees.

UNDER THE 1984 law, prosecutors are supposed to get the approval of a judge or magistrate before arresting someone as a material witness—in essence, the judiciary is supposed to ensure that the statute is not being abused. But by and large, the federal judiciary appears to have put up little resistance to prosecutors' dramatically expanded use of the material-witness law. At a forum held recently by New York City's bar association, Judge Michael Mukasey, who oversees the federal court in Manhattan that has handled the bulk of the country's post-September-11 material-witness cases, offered assurances that the witnesses have been promptly taken before judges who determined that their detention was necessary and just.

One of Mukasey's colleagues on the bench, however, is not so sure. Over a holiday weekend in February, Judge Shira Scheindlin held an extraordinary four-day hearing to explore whether the Justice Department and a federal magistrate

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ignored provisions in the material-witness law in the case of Osama Awadallah, a Jordanian who holds a U.S. green card and has lived in California for almost three years. Upon ordering the hearing, Scheindlin stated, "Awadallah's twenty-day detention deserves further scrutiny because the government may have failed to comply with the statute that grants it the authority to detain a material witness." Under the law, a judge is supposed to consider whether taking a sworn statement from the witness would be an adequate alternative to keeping him or her in jail. But Scheindlin found "no indication that the government attempted to take Awadallah's deposition or offered to explain why it would not have been feasible."

The circumstances of Awadallah's arrest and detention have been aired publicly only because he was subsequently charged with lying to a grand jury about his ties to two of the hijackers. (Scheindlin freed him on bail and has said that his misstatements may have been the result of a "perjury trap" set by the government. At press time, she was still considering a defense motion to dismiss the perjury case.)

But for most detainees, there has been no public accounting of whether prosecutors, judges, and magistrates have acted appropriately. Within days of the September 11 strikes, Mukasey announced that court hearings in all of the material-witness cases would be closed to the press and the public on the grounds that they were connected to a grand jury probe. (Grand juries, by law and tradition, usually carry out their business in secret.) The transcripts, dockets, and court orders in the material-witness cases remain sealed. Last fall Mukasey's secretary told *The Washington Post* that Mukasey wanted the cases kept secret "forever."

At the recent bar forum, Mukasey suggested that detainees and their lawyers could have publicized their cases but chose not to. "[T]hey and their lawyers believe it is not in their interest to go in front of a camera and say, 'You know what? My client was taken into custody in connection with one of the most ghastly crimes ever committed in this society.'"

But Randy Hamud, a San Diego lawyer who has represented various material witnesses including Awadallah, disagrees. "[Mukasey] is disingenuous when he says that," says Hamud. Since the material-witness cases are sealed, attorneys are prohibited from publicly commenting on them. "Not even the lawyers can discuss them or their clients' identities without risk of contempt of court," says Hamud.

The witnesses themselves are technically free to discuss their plight. But most of them are in solitary confinement with little or no access to phones or visitors, making it impractical to call a press conference. What public accounts exist come largely from people lucky enough to be released.

What makes this virtual information blackout particularly galling is that it's far from clear that the law requires the strict secrecy Mukasey has imposed. Material witnesses arrested early on in the Oklahoma City bombing investigation were brought to hearings in open court, and the reasons for their detention were set forth publicly. No harm to the inquiry seems to have resulted. And federal courts in Washington, Texas, and Washington, D.C., have all held open hearings about material witnesses sought for grand jury probes. The dockets of those cases are also public for all to see.

And the benefits of public court proceedings are more than abstract. Late last year Abdallah Higazy was secretly jailed as a material witness after an aircraft radio was allegedly found in a hotel room he occupied near the World Trade Center on September 11. After one month another hotel guest came forward to say the radio was his; Higazy was released soon thereafter. Had Higazy's arrest been publicized when it occurred, as is typical in criminal cases, the true owner of the radio might have come forward sooner. And Higazy could have been spared four weeks in jail.

One puzzling question about prosecutors' aggressive use of the material-witness law is why the press has not tried harder to gain access to the cases. O'Shea says that as a prosecutor he had to fend off press challenges to the sealing of individual documents in cases of far less national interest than the September 11 attacks. "[T]hey'd be all over me," he says. This time, by contrast, the media has sat on its hands. "I didn't see the editorial boards or management of these newspapers hiring lawyers to go in and challenge this stuff," he says.

Prior to September 11, New York newspapers, led by *The New York Times*, went to court on at least two occasions to press for access to terrorism-related judicial proceedings. One case stemmed from the 1998 bombings of U.S. Embassies in Africa. Another involved a man held as a material witness in connection with the alleged plot to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport at the turn of the millennium. The challenges were not particularly successful, although the court did agree to make some limited docket information public in such cases. (Since September 11 that promise seems to have been ignored.)

Some media lawyers have suggested that no formal challenge was mounted this time because given those precedents, it would have had little chance of success. But considering that the secret hearings were connected to the biggest news story in decades, it's odd that no news outlet even tried. Even an ultimately unsuccessful challenge might have reined in the government's penchant for secrecy a bit.

The material-witness statute, to be sure, is not the only aggressive legal tactic the government has used to prosecute the war on terrorism at home. In fact, others—for instance, military tribunals or toughened enforcement of immigration laws—have produced much more public concern. But prosecutors' broad use of the material-witness law is different—and more dangerous—because it is easy to envision its extension to investigations that have no connection to terrorism whatsoever. Immigration proceedings, no matter how peremptory or unfair, will never pose a direct threat to U.S. citizens. And there are no signs that the United States intends to corral Americans at Guantanamo Bay or bring them before military tribunals. But the chilling thing about the material-witness law is that nothing in it prevents it from being used against U.S. citizens. Having met so little resistance this time, federal prosecutors may be tempted to turn to it in the future to lock up people without charge or public hearing. And then we may regret having allowed this dramatic expansion in government power to pass unnoticed. ■

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Why mammograms are not the answer.

Search and Destroy

By SHANNON BROWNLEE

IN 1986 THE JAPANESE health department launched a campaign to screen infants for neuroblastoma, the second most common form of early-childhood cancer, after leukemia. The test was easy to administer: Parents simply pressed a piece of filter paper to their baby's wet diaper, allowed the paper to dry, and then mailed it to a laboratory. Doctors had known since the 1950s that neuroblastoma tumors cause the body to excrete an unmistakable chemical signature in the urine; in the 1980s analyzing that signature became simple enough to perform on a large scale. With the advent of this simple test, Japanese doctors reasoned that they could detect tumors in their earliest stages, before they began producing symptoms, and thus improve the odds of babies surviving the disease.

Parents complied with the public health campaign in droves. By the mid-1990s 80 percent of Japanese infants, nearly one million per year, were being tested. Not surprisingly, diagnoses of neuroblastoma shot up, as much as tenfold in some areas. The cure rate also rose dramatically. Before screening began, neuroblastoma—which usually appears between six months and six years of age—killed 80 percent of its young victims in Japan. By 1995 practically every Japanese child whose tumor was detected through screening was successfully treated with surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy.

There was just one problem: While the cure rate for neuroblastoma rose, the overall death rate—that is, the number of Japanese children per 100,000 who died of the disease—scarcely budged. The reason for this apparent contradiction, it later turned out, is that there are two different forms of neuroblastoma, both of which look identical under a microscope, but only one of which is picked up by the screening test. That type, moreover, often disappears spontaneously without treatment. Meanwhile the other, potentially deadly form of neuroblastoma cannot be detected by the test early enough to affect survival rates because it either does not put out the telltale chemicals until it has already progressed to an advanced stage or the tumor is so aggressive it resists most treatment. In other words, Japanese doctors have been using an array of intrusive, potentially dangerous treatments on infants to "cure" harmless neuroblastoma tumors that would disappear of their own accord, while doing little or nothing to reduce the deaths associated with the disease's deadlier variant.

By now the astute reader will be wondering if there might be a connection between neuroblastoma screening and the ongoing—and increasingly heated—debate over the merits of mammography in combating breast cancer. There is. As with neuroblastoma, there are several kinds of breast cancer, not all of which will prove deadly. And while mammography—in contrast with the neuroblastoma test—does detect some potentially deadly cancers and has thus saved some women's lives, it also picks up many times more cancers that would never have become symptomatic during the patient's lifetime or that could have been treated just as easily had they not been detected until the woman could feel the lump herself. Thus for every woman saved by early diagnosis, many others receive costly, painful, and potentially dangerous treatment to destroy tumors that pose little or no threat—tumors that they might die *with*, not *of*. As Barnett Kramer, director of medical applications of research at the National Institutes of Health, puts it, "Not everything that looks like cancer acts like cancer."

That notion flies in the face of what practically every woman in America has come to believe about breast cancer. Most of us accept the premise that all breast tumors will eventually kill us if left untreated and that catching them early is our only hope. That belief is reinforced by doctors who feel compelled to treat the vast majority of breast tumors as if they were potentially deadly, because they lack the tools to determine which ones really are.

And so the battle lines are drawn: On the one side is most of the American medical establishment—doctors, hospitals, major advocacy groups such as the American Cancer Society (ACS)—which pushes mammograms as a necessity for women over 40 and spends tens of millions of dollars per year on public health campaigns to this effect. On the other side is a smaller but increasingly vocal contingent of epidemiologists, doctors, and advocates who suggest that mammography screening has led thousands of women each year to receive risky, costly treatment they don't need, while doing little or nothing to cut the overall breast cancer death rate.

What's the right answer? For individual women, there is none—it depends on the risk of breast cancer a woman is willing to tolerate and on the cost and risk she's willing to tolerate in order to reduce that risk. But for society, it's becoming clear that mammography is no longer the best focus of our financial and medical resources. Whether or not individual women continue to be screened, doctors, hospitals, scientists, and politicians need to turn their focus—and their money—toward the emerging technologies that could help doctors more accurately predict which tumors require aggressive treatment and which can safely be left alone. The

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United States needs to enter the post-mammography era—and the sooner the better.

EARLY DIAGNOSIS IS the fundamental premise behind all cancer screening. A good screening test picks up tumors before they have a chance to spread, allowing a surgeon to remove all vestiges of cancerous cells or allowing a radiation therapist to destroy them with x-rays. Ideally a screening test detects errant cells when they are still in a precancerous stage.

That's what the Pap smear does. Invented in the 1940s by George Papanicolaou, a Greek-born American doctor, the Pap smear allows doctors to sample cells from the cervix and look for precancerous lesions. If they discover such lesions, doctors can then remove them, or sometimes the cervix or the uterus, before the tumor develops into full-blown cancer. By the early 1970s widespread use of the Pap smear had cut U.S. mortality from cervical cancer in half, the first demonstration that early cancer detection could save lives.

The Pap smear, it turns out, was uncommonly effective. By contrast, the merits of mammography have never been so clear-cut. The early-diagnosis approach to breast cancer emerged in the first part of the twentieth century—when women often didn't come to the doctor until their tumors were the size of oranges—and was firmly entrenched by the time physicians began putting soft-tissue x-rays, or mammograms, to use in the 1960s. The ACS had already been pushing breast self-exams for two decades; the purpose of mammograms was to detect breast tumors still earlier, before they could be felt manually. By 1989 at least eleven national health organizations, including the American Medical Association and the National Cancer Institute (NCI), were recommending that women 40 years of age and older get regular mammograms.

But for almost as long as mammography has been in widespread use, it has had its critics, particularly when it comes to younger women. The NCI has flip-flopped three times since it first recommended in the 1980s that all women over 40 get regular mammograms. Most recently, the NCI took up the question in 1997, convening an independent panel that concluded there was insufficient evidence either for or against mammography for women in their forties. Under pressure from Congress, however, the NCI reversed itself later that year, recommending that all women over 40 get screened.

The current round of debate began last fall with the publication of a paper in *The Lancet*, a British scientific journal, arguing that the main studies purporting to show the benefits of mammography were so methodologically flawed that their results were meaningless. The issue boiled over in January, when an independent panel of scientific advisers to the NCI agreed with the paper's finding. It concluded that the evidence that mammography saves lives was insufficient to say one way or the other whether women of *any* age should get a yearly mammogram.

The counterattack began almost immediately. In January ten medical groups, led by the ACS, took out full-page newspaper ads stating that "lives will be lost" if women are discouraged from getting mammograms. The following month Tommy Thompson, secretary of Health and Human Services, pronounced, "The federal government's recommendation remains clear: Women in their forties and older should be screened every one to two years with mammography."

At issue is the meaning of seven large clinical breast cancer trials conducted in North America and Europe since the early '60s. These trials tracked the survival rates of women who received regular mammograms and compared them to those of women who had regular clinical breast exams but very few, if any, mammograms. Of the seven trials, five appeared to show an improvement in survival among the group receiving regular mammograms. The improvement was as much as 30 percent, at least for women 50 years of age and older.

The *Lancet* article reanalyzed the data from the seven clinical trials and concluded that the five that showed a benefit suffered from methodological errors that invalidated their conclusions. In one study, for example, which began in the '60s, 153 out of 30,131 women who received mammograms died of breast cancer after 18 years of study, compared with 196 out of 30,131 women who did not receive screening and died of the disease. That's a 30 percent difference, but it's based on a difference of 43 women out of more than 60,000. For their part, mammography supporters counter that the authors of the *Lancet* article inflated the importance of tiny errors in the clinical trials and failed to acknowledge statistical adjustments intended to correct methodological flaws.

But a compelling critique of the effectiveness of mammography can be made even without entering into the details of this arcane debate over the meaning of the clinical trials.

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That's because when one looks at the broader picture, mammography resembles the neuroblastoma screening conducted on Japanese children. Regardless of any benefit the clinical trials might (or might not) suggest, the overall death rate from breast cancer—again, the number of women per 100,000 who die of the disease—has hardly budged over the last three decades, even as more and more women have been getting mammograms. As Fran Visco, president of the National Breast Cancer Coalition, a patient advocate group, put it in testimony before Congress earlier this year, "Mammography should be accepted for what it is ... it may extend the lives of some women who have breast cancer, but it does not prevent or cure breast cancer, and it has many limitations."

Today approximately 60 percent of women over age 50 are screened regularly, up from 13 percent in 1980. Yet the mortality rate from the disease has only recently begun to drop noticeably, and it's not at all clear that the drop is due to mammography. Age-adjusted mortality from breast cancer held steady at about 27 deaths per 100,000 women from 1973—when the U.S. government began keeping statistics—until 1992, when the numbers began to dip slightly. By 1998, the last year for which statistics are available, the death rate from breast cancer was down to 22.7 per 100,000—a significant reduction, but still modest when one considers the vast increase in the number of women who are now being screened. Some cancer experts, moreover, argue that this drop is mostly the result of improved treatments—especially the hormone blocker tamoxifen, which can cut a woman's risk of cancer recurrence by 25 percent. (A study is now underway to determine whether mammography, or new treatments, or both, are responsible for the declining death rate.)

EARLY DETECTION CAN fail to reduce the cancer death rate for two reasons. Either the test is not sufficiently sensitive to pick up cancers early enough to make a difference, or it largely detects so-called "indolent" tumors—tumors that might never pose a danger to the patient, even if left undetected.

Mammography suffers from both flaws. Earlier and earlier diagnosis has undoubtedly saved some women's lives, but it can do little to improve a woman's odds against the most deadly breast cancers—which are extremely fast-growing and invasive—no matter how early they are caught. At the same time, many of the tumors mammography detects, particularly in older women, might never have caused symptoms serious enough to merit treatment. "Mammograms are very good at finding indolent breast cancer but not at finding the aggressive sort," says Visco.

The problem is that doctors often can't tell the difference between aggressive and indolent breast tumors, particularly when they are small. So as improved mammography picks up smaller and smaller lumps, doctors are treating more and more of them as if they were potentially deadly, though in fact most will turn out not to be. "If you take ten women with [early] tumors and treat them all with surgery, radiation, and chemo, one will die anyway," says Susan Love, a prominent breast cancer surgeon and frequent critic of mammography. "Two of them will be cured, and seven would have gotten better with local treatment alone. Out of those seven who would have survived without chemo or radiation, an unknown number will suffer significant, permanent side effects from the treatment." These lasting side effects can include organ and nerve damage, pain, sterility, depressed immunity, cognitive impairment, decreased bone density, and the risk of future leukemia—to say nothing of the psychological toll on women who are left to worry about a recurrence of breast cancer for the rest of their lives.

TO THE INDIVIDUAL woman facing the possibility that she is among the unlucky percentage with an aggressive tumor, the prospect of unnecessary chemo and radiation may seem a small price to pay for peace of mind. But as a matter of public health policy, the overtreatment caused by mammography is a real problem. The average size of tumors picked up by mammography has steadily decreased over the past 20 years. Now approximately 60 percent of breast cancers—about 120,000 cases per year—are "localized" (less than two centimeters in length and not yet spread to the lymph nodes), according to data from the NCI. Of those 120,000 cases, 70 percent, or about 84,000 women, would be cured by surgery alone. (An unknown number would have been fine—i.e., their tumors would have disappeared on their own or never become symptomatic—even without surgery.) Yet because doctors cannot tell which tumors require additional treatment, they give radiation to nearly all breast cancer patients with localized tumors. On top of the radiation, doctors gave additional chemo or hormone therapy to 62 percent of those patients in 1995, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

The most troublesome area of overtreatment is a condition known as ductal carcinoma in situ, or DCIS. Thirty years ago these miniscule abnormalities, often no bigger than a pencil point, were diagnosed in only 6 percent of patients, usually during a biopsy or surgery for breast cancer. Today, thanks to mammography, DCIS represents nearly 20 percent of breast cancer diagnoses—and doctors have no idea what to do about it. They disagree over whether DCIS is a precancerous condition that bears watching but requires no treatment, or a small tumor that simply has not yet become invasive and needs to come out. "We know the majority of women with DCIS will not get cancer, but we don't know which ones. So of course our hand is forced," says Love. A DCIS diagnosis is now one of the most common reasons a woman undergoes a mastectomy, because the tiny lesions are often found scattered throughout the breast and cannot be removed individually. "We've gone from seeing women come in with fruit-sized tumors to detecting tumors that are no bigger than a needle. Yet there's this persistent sense that if you just make the mammograms better, or do digital mammograms, this wonderful, life-saving bounty will occur," says Barron Lerner, a physician and author of *The Breast Cancer Wars*. "We have reached the limits of early detection."

Nor is the dilemma confined to breast cancer. The prostate-specific antigen test, or PSA, for example, picks up large numbers of harmless prostate tumors (see "Unkind

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Cuts," by Shannon Brownlee, TNR, March 22, 1999), and leads to thousands of unnecessary surgeries. As new screening technologies emerge, and more and more Americans are screened, says Kirsten Boyd Goldberg, editor of *The Cancer Letter*, a newsletter that covers the cancer industry, "This problem is going to be repeated over and over in nearly every single cancer."

None of this is to suggest that women and doctors should abandon mammography entirely. But barring a breakthrough cure for breast cancer—the Holy Grail of cancer research, and about as likely in the near future—there are two ways the public health community can respond to this overtesting dilemma. One is to continue pushing women to get mammograms, while simultaneously conducting multimillion-dollar studies to hopefully, someday, prove that their benefits outweigh their costs. This, unfortunately, seems to be the path the American medical establishment is taking. The latest round of skeptical reports has not shaken the ACS's position. The Society expects to spend an estimated $20 million this year promoting mammography, particularly among minority and poor women. The NCI, for its part, is considering reanalyzing the existing clinical mammography trials one more time. The Institute has also not ruled out launching a new trial altogether, an effort that would cost several million dollars and would take close to a decade to complete. And conducting it would not be easy, since researchers estimate they would need to recruit nearly half a million women willing to be told by the flip of a coin whether or not to have regular mammograms.

Indeed, if we continue on the current path, it's likely that ten years from now we will be in very much the same position we are in now—and that we were in ten years ago. There will be studies that purport to show that mammography saves women's lives and studies that purport to show that it doesn't. More than 100,000 American women per year will have aggressive treatment for tumors discovered through mammography—many unnecessarily. It will, in short, be a colossal waste of money, time, and women's lives. "We are not going to get anywhere if we keep arguing about mammograms and devoting millions of dollars to new studies," says Visco. "The end goal should be saving lives, not saving mammography."

There is an alternative. Public health organizations could acknowledge that early detection through mammography has proven of limited use in the war against breast cancer and could devote their energies—and research dollars—to developing better diagnostic tools.

For nearly a century now, doctors have used the size of a tumor, whether it has begun to invade surrounding tissue, and the presence of cancer cells in the lymph nodes to diagnose breast cancer. But these crude surgeon's measures do not take into account our emerging understanding of cancer genetics. Over the last two decades basic research has shown that every tumor contains its own unique set of genetic mutations. Some mutations allow cells simply to reproduce but not invade surrounding tissue. Others give cancer cells the power to break free from the mother tumor and travel through the bloodstream to distant locations in the body. Researchers can now identify thousands of the mangled bits of DNA that drive cancer cells. And over the last two years they have begun to figure out which mutations can serve as accurate markers for a patient's prognosis.

These efforts have been made possible by a new tool known as "microarrays," or gene chips: tiny silicon wafers that detect genetic mutations and deliver that information to a computer. Clinical trials are now underway to sort out which of several thousand mutations are most likely to indicate how aggressive or indolent a tumor is and whether or not it has already metastasized.

Using a breast tumor's genetic fingerprint would represent a paradigm shift in how doctors think about breast cancer—and transform the way they treat it. A new technology called ductal lavage is enabling researchers to flush cells from the lining of the milk ducts, where all breast cancers begin, in order to look for the earliest stages of cancer and to monitor DCIS. In as little as five years, microarrays could allow doctors to determine which cancers require aggressive treatment—and which don't. "It will be two or three years before we have confidence that microarrays are really as powerful a tool as early studies suggest," says Carlos Caldas, a researcher at Cambridge. But the effect of using them to help doctors stop overtreating breast cancer—and perhaps even to leave some breast cancers alone—he has said, is "potentially staggering."

It's a potentially staggering development you've probably never heard of, however, in part because policymakers, the medical establishment, and patients still consider cancer an enemy that can only be fought by catching it early and attacking it with everything we've got. And over the past decades a vast network of entrenched interests has arisen to serve that intellectual framework. Last year alone, the NCI poured $36.7 million into mammography research. The radiologists who interpret the results of mammograms practice one of the most highly paid specialties. The manufacture of mammography equipment is a $300 million annual industry; cancer drugs are worth another several billion dollars more per year. This enterprise will have to be reconfigured in order for doctors to stop overtreating breast cancer.

In Japan, doctors and health officials have long known that the death rate from neuroblastoma was not going down, even as the number of infants screened was going up. Yet they have remained reluctant to abandon the compelling logic of early diagnosis. Earlier this month the *New England Journal of Medicine* published the results of two large-scale, multimillion-dollar studies that should finally put to rest the debate over neuroblastoma screening. "We are really hoping this will be the nail in the coffin for neuroblastoma screening in Japan, and they will stop," says William Woods, leader of one of the clinical trials and director of the AFLAC Cancer Center in Atlanta, Georgia. His study, which was conducted in Canada and the United States, required 13 years to complete, the participation of half a million Canadian infants, a team of 31 researchers, and well over $6 million. What will it take for American policymakers to recognize mammography's limitations and choose a wiser course instead? ■

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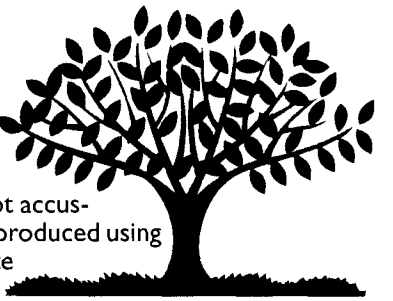
Energy & the Environment

A Snapshot on Earth Day



Whether heating our homes or running our businesses, Americans are not accustomed to devoting much thought to whether the electricity we use was produced using nuclear power, natural gas, or alternative sources. Nor do we often contemplate the environmental impact of these decisions. Yet energy and the environment are fundamentally linked, and the relationship is worthy of our greater attention. Earth Day offers Americans the annual opportunity to examine this connection and how trade-offs are made between economic growth, environmental well-being, and maintaining our standard of living.

Accounting for one fifth of global GDP, the United States is the largest producer and consumer of energy in the world. For hundreds of years, our economic growth has been a direct result of fossil fuel consumption. Yet more recently, fossil fuels also have come to be associated with the phenomenon of global warming as well as other environmental dilemmas such as acid rain. One of the major factors of our past, and present, economic successes is coal. While coal is considered the workhorse of the industrial age—powering everything from factories to trains to ships—today's coal is primarily used in power plants to generate electricity. In fact, more than half of the country's electricity (51 percent) is produced using coal. The major advantage to the United States using this resource is its abundance here (we rank first in worldwide reserves of coal), and thus it continues to serve as a cheap and dependable source of fuel. But critics claim that coal has been anything but clean: CO_2, sulfur dioxide, and other potentially harmful emissions are known by-products of coal combustion. In response, the government, the scientific community, and the coal industry are working together to devise and implement new, cleaner solutions. Advocates of "clean-coal" technologies insist that coal can be utilized safely; indeed, coal-burning technology has made great strides in recent years.

Perhaps no single natural resource discovered and exploited by man has shaped the modern world more profoundly, however, than oil. Global transport—from the family car to the Concorde—is wholly dependent on its continued use. And predictably, no other country in the world consumes more of it than the United States, both from domestic sources as well as from oilfields abroad. Although opening additional U.S. territories to oil and gas production has always been controversial, few topics have spawned more debate in Washington recently than energy exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Proponents argue that the bill would create thousands of jobs while simultaneously reducing America's dependence on foreign oil, while opponents claim that any additional oil produced would not be justified by the potential threats to the area's wildlife. Conservation, they argue, would be a better solution, as 43 percent of the oil consumed in the U.S. today is refined and sold as gasoline for car owners.

Fifty years ago, many looked to nuclear energy to serve as a pathway to go beyond fossil fuels. Today the nation's 104 nuclear power reactors provide about 20 percent of total U.S. electricity generation, second only to coal in the U.S. power mix. The advantage of nuclear energy has always been that it does not involve the burning of fossil fuels. The downside, however, is that the storage and disposal of nuclear waste is expensive and dif-

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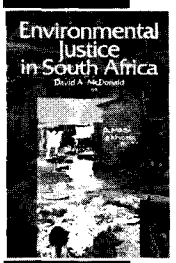

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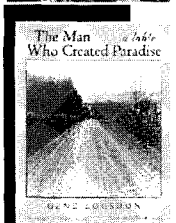

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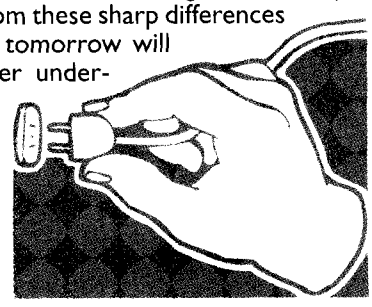
ficult, and the industry struggles with a negative public image. The regulatory response to these public fears has unequivocally contributed to the stagnation of the U.S. nuclear industry. In addition, it is not yet clear how added concern over the potential for terrorist attacks on nuclear facilities in the wake of 9/11 will affect the fate of the industry.

If Plato correctly surmised that "Necessity is the mother of invention," then alternative and renewable (e.g., wind, solar, fuel cells) sources of energy have strong potential to ensure a more balanced portfolio of fuel choices in the future. By easing our dependence on fossil fuels, renewable alternatives may help lessen some of America's environmental and strategic concerns. Traditionally, the main issue with the development of non-carbon-emitting sources of renewable energy such as wind and solar power has been a heavy reliance on government subsidies to approach levels of market competitiveness. This remains a problem, although in certain parts of the country, technological advances have brought capital costs down to levels where some alternative energy sources have started to become competitive. The U.S. wind energy industry, for example, had its most productive year in 2001, installing nearly 1,700 megawatts (MW) or $1.7 billion worth of new generating equipment—more than doubling their previous record for new installations. Nevertheless, despite their growing popularity with policymakers and environmentalists, wind and other alternative energy sources are not likely to supply more than a tiny fraction of U.S. energy needs for many years to come.

Earth Day is also an important time to reflect on the many advances we have made. We are currently beginning to reap the rewards of a vigorous sense of environmental awareness that began to spread from our local communities to the halls of Congress more than 30 years ago. The quality of water and air in many parts of the United States is better now than at any time in the last half-century. Great strides in energy-efficiency and pollution-abating technologies have also been made. Today the United States can justifiably claim to be one of the least polluted and most environmentally responsible nations on Earth. This achievement is all the more remarkable, in that our capacity for economic growth remains the envy of the world. Admittedly, Americans are probably more reactive than proactive when it comes to serious policy questions where the long view must be taken.

When contemplating the future, pessimists tend to argue that little short of a series of environmental disasters could force Americans to lay aside their ideological differences and finally locate the ideal balance between today's energy needs and the right to a sustainable future for the generations to come. Yet grounds for optimism remain. For it is precisely from these sharp differences of opinion that the solutions of tomorrow will likely emerge and, thus, a clearer understanding of the necessary trade-offs between producing and consuming energy and protecting our environment. It is therefore important that we endeavor to greet every Earth Day with a sense of hope and assurance.



by John Sottong

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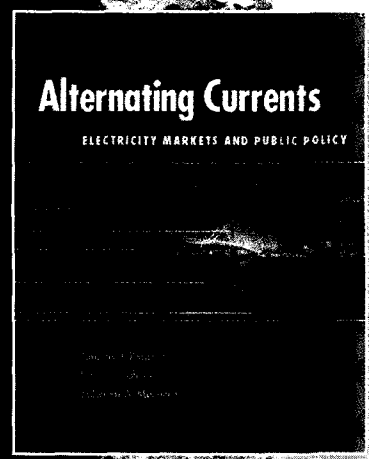

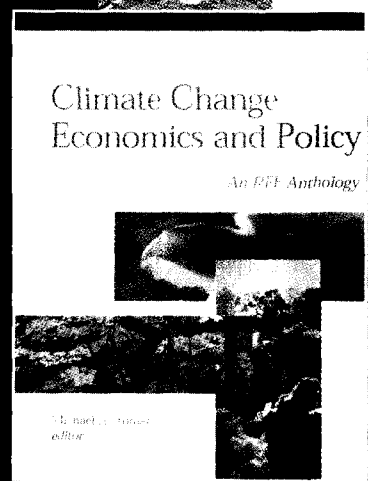

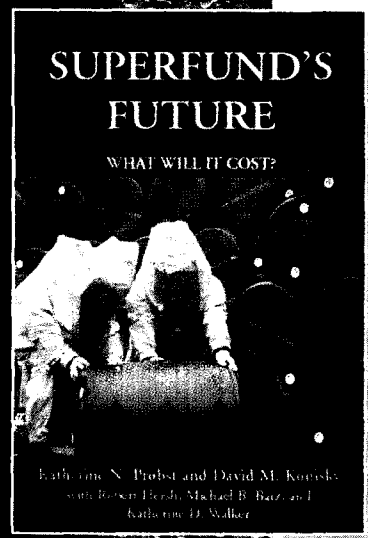

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Investing One's Life

ALIENATED LABOR, SAID Marx, is at the base of the capitalist system. This alienation has four aspects. The worker produces something that is alien to him and to his life; the worker becomes alienated from himself because his work is not part of his real life; his social essence is taken from him because he does not feel himself part of society; and as a result he finds himself alienated from other men. All these factors affect, in some degree, the protagonist of **Time Out** (ThinkFilm).

Written and directed by Laurent Cantet, this French film is certainly not a Marxist tract—it is a gravely mysterious artwork—yet it would be foolish to ignore the connection between Vincent, the protagonist, and those Marxist symptoms. He is in early middle age, happily married with three children, living comfortably in the Grenoble area. But we know from the start that he is not really living comfortably. We first see him waking up in his car, where he has obviously spent the night. He calls his wife on his cell phone, fibs about where he has been, then fibs again when he says that he has a business appointment. He has no such appointment. He is just drifting about, pretending to his family that he is traveling on business.

He is, in fact, out of work. For some sixteen years he had been on the staff of various investment firms. About three months ago he was fired, and he has concealed it from his family. He never precisely tells us why: he does not know precisely. He seems just to want to float. Yet he has concocted a large-scale investment scheme, getting money from some of his friends, being honest to the degree that he tells them of risks and makes no promises. He is not even putting this scheme into practice. Apparently he just wants to be active in some manner, selling and persuading, because those are the only synapses with which he can assure himself that he is alive.

Vincent returns home frequently to his family, whom he clearly loves—he attends a toy fair put on by the younger ones, he sees his older son win a judo match—but this authentic family life is wrapped in his inauthentic pretense about work. It is worse than that. Though he is, in a behavioral way, sane and normal, he has not mentally faced the cold truth that his masquerade is doomed. Sooner or later his wife must find out, his money will run out, his pretenses will be baldly revealed. He has no plan to protect himself, none whatever.

Perhaps he has concealed the fact that he was fired because he was secretly glad of it. He may never have read a word of Marx, but he is recoiling, in classic Marxist pattern, from the alienated life that he has been living—recoiling so severely that he has not even considered where his behavior must lead.

Only one man understands him and can help him. Jean-Michel, somewhat older, quieter, is a fast-shuffle dealer who has served a prison term and is not ashamed of it. (His daughter has prepared an album of clippings about it for him.) In a hotel lobby, he overhears Vincent talking about investment. He senses Vincent's trouble and offers him work buying goods cheaply in Poland and selling them in France at a huge markup. Jean-Michel becomes a sort of secular priest to Vincent, hearing his confession. Whenever this experienced swindler asks Vincent what he hopes to gain from his present mode of living, where he thinks it will lead, all Vincent can say, abstractedly, is "I don't know." In short, Jean-Michel reveals that, even in terms of a con game, Vincent is muddled, unbalanced. His reaction to his situation, even to his prospects, has been irrational, as if that situation had numbed his perception of reality.

The inevitable happens. Vincent's wife finds out that his accounts of business activity in the last months were inventions. His children are stunned; his father—retired and well-off—is more tolerant and supportive. There is a family showdown, in which Vincent behaves not like a disclosed liar but like a misunderstood victim. He gets into his car and drives away. (He has told us that he loves to drive. His car, in which he also does not mind sleeping, is a kind of haven.) He stops somewhere in the country, gets out, and walks off into the darkness. We are left wondering what the finish will be. Will it be something drastic?

In a sense, it is. In the next scene, a few months later, Vincent is being interviewed for an important job with an investment firm, an interview arranged by his father. The interviewer is impressed by Vincent's resumé and even approves Vincent's recent months of unemployment as sensible, taking time to choose. This man tells Vincent that the new job will require enthusiasm and commitment. The camera moves in on Vincent. He says, "I'm not scared." The camera comes even nearer. Almost in close-up he says, "I'm not scared." The end.

Is he lying? To himself as well as to the interviewer? Has he ingested and absorbed the impulses that drove him to irrationality? *Time Out* does not tell us. It leaves us wondering what will happen in the reels that we will not see. Vincent is investing his life again—again in the investment business. Is he really restored? Or are grim possibilities still ahead of him? We are not able to decide—which, oddly, is one of the elements of the film that haunt us.

The making of *Time Out* is exquisite. Cantet has been a cinematographer, and with a team of five others he has shot a film that moves continually in and out of shadow. Not scary pitch-black shadow, but grayness, suggesting the grayness in which Vincent lives. A statistician might discover that Vincent and the others are seen as often in suggestive shadow as in full light. The music by Jocelyn Pook is mostly for strings, and constantly evokes the intimacy and detail of chamber music.

The actors are all that we could ask. Aurélien Recoing, who plays Vincent, has the look of a refined Karl Malden and was surely chosen because he is a face in the crowd, yet not a dull one. The only really flavorful performance is of Jean-Michel by Serge Livrozet, who has had, we are told, a wily life, and who can suggest a wisdom garnered in dark corners.

Cantet's previous film, *Human Resources*, which I missed, was about a factory worker whose thirty years at a machine have made him a part of it. In *Time Out* Cantet proposes—empathically, succinctly—that a white collar is not necessarily a safeguard against the blue-collar blues.

Billy Wilder, who died on March 27 at the age of ninety-five, was the last of the many European film-makers who came to America to escape Hitler. Wilder, as director and as screenwriter, was different from most of that group: he relished

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America, but he did not want to lose the Europe that he had brought with him. If I may quote from my review of a Wilder biography:

> Possibly the most salient aspect of his character is a paradox. Embracing Hollywood, in itself and as an epitome of America, he nonetheless wanted his films to contradict it, at least partly. He wanted to create an atmosphere of deft European theater and film in his pictures.... Ensconced in a huge heterogeneous country ... he wanted to make films for an audience as homogeneous as he dared to imagine it.

One of the more familiar Wilder stories is that he and a friend went to the funeral of (his adored) Ernst Lubitsch in 1947, and on their way out the friend said, "Well, no more Lubitsch." Said Wilder, "Worse than that. No more Lubitsch pictures." When the news came on March 27, my mind changed the name in that last line. ■

Jennifer Homans on Dance

The Day Is Past and Gone

I.

ALVIN AILEY'S *Revelations* is one of the most popular ballets of our time. When the piece premiered at New York's Kaufman Concert Hall in 1960, the audience was so moved that it sat in stunned silence while the dancers bowed nervously, waiting for some sign of applause. When the applause came, it was deafening. Ailey's career took off. Until his death in 1989, he made dozens of dances and led his company to international fame, but *Revelations* remained his signature piece, and an emblem of the Ailey style. At the Herod Atticus amphitheater in Athens, six thousand spectators rose spontaneously to their feet and cheered for twenty minutes. In Moscow, audiences went so wild that Ailey had to "do the Judy Garland thing" and sit at the front of the stage communing with his adoring fans. More people have seen *Revelations* than *Swan Lake*. And during the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's recent season at City Center in New York, *Revelations* earned the usual foot-stomping ovations. Even the most sophisticated audiences do not seem to tire of this American classic.

Revelations is one of the great dances of the twentieth century, and its place in the canon of American modern dance is assured. But *Revelations* is not just a modern dance, it is also a black dance, and Ailey was a black choreographer. Today this matters a lot: Ailey was recently conscripted by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Cornel West as one of the black artists who forged what they call "the African American century." In their book of that name, they laud Ailey for his success in standing strong in a white world: "He celebrated the beauty of the black body as no one has done before or since." But their admiration for *Revelations* is somewhat qualified. In it, they say, Ailey "relied on the black folk culture of a somewhat romanticized and idyllic portrait of a cloistered and unsullied rural Texas." They recognize the importance of *Revelations*, but its transcendent glow makes them squirm.

Why? *Revelations* stands at the crossroads of civil rights and modern dance, and its clarity of style and purpose contrasts sharply with Gates's and West's fascination with the ambiguities and the pitfalls of the post-civil-rights era. *Revelations* is black *and* American, and so does not quite fit with a politics that promises to set the race record straight by distinguishing "the distinctive forms of black genius" from their American context. Aesthetically and historically, Ailey's masterpiece belongs to the progressive, humanist tradition of American modern dance, not to an ahistorical, new-wave African American nationalism. Gates and West can deploy Ailey in their project to "affirm black dignity," but they cannot reduce *Revelations* to blackness: it has a more

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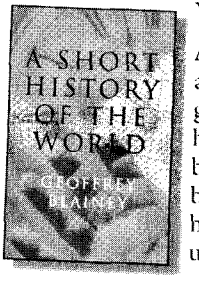

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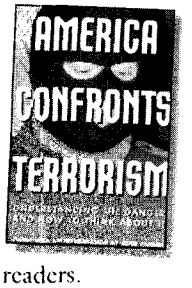

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complicated and interesting aesthetic.

Revelations is indeed simple and idealistic. But its success does not derive from its "universality," as many have claimed. To the contrary, *Revelations* is powerful because it evokes, as Ailey himself noted, the life of "small black churches in every small Texas town" with great precision. It matches a particular history with the music of black spirituals to build an argument for freedom. It is not "popular," "slick," or pandering, but evangelical in its physical rhetoric. It does not entertain; it galvanizes. It is no accident that when Ailey and his dancers performed *Revelations* in 1962 at a Benefit for Birmingham fund-raiser for the work of Martin Luther King Jr., audiences—for once—wept instead of cheered.

Revelations is a series of self-contained portraits, each with its own spatial geometry (pyramid, line, sharp diagonal), physical quality (slow, undulating, fiercely energetic) and full-bodied color (scorching red, sun-drenched yellow, unadulterated white). The portraits are arranged according to a transparent logic: we move from the melancholy rusts of "Pilgrim of Sorrow" through the celebratory whites of baptism ("Take Me to the Water") to the deep oranges of "Rocka My Soul" redemption ("Move, Members, Move").

With incisive gestures and movements, each portrait evokes some aspect of black life in the South. In "The Day Is Past and Gone," we see a group of black "church ladies" wearing deep yellow dresses with fans and hats to match. Each has a stool. As the dance begins, the women turn their backs to the audience and lower themselves—slowly, deliberately, and in unison—with creaks and crooked backs onto the stools, which are arranged across the stage like pews. As they sit, we can feel the heat glinting from their fans. We can smell the South, sense its slow, sprawling rhythms, and see the strong character (and self-mocking humor) of these matriarchs.

But Ailey was after more than descriptive imagery: *Revelations* also has rhetorical force. The steps are clear, energetic, and logically constructed. The weighted linear architecture of modern dance is stretched with balletic lyricism, and the open, expansive movements follow a natural path through the body. Ailey articulates each step, never crowding or layering his meaning. But once the step is "spoken," he pushes it: he adds an undulation to a contraction, an athletic twist to a pure line, a spectacular backbend to a knee hinge. With such simple devices, basic dance phrases are made to feel restless and ambitious—yet never unbalanced.

The style is hopeful and "centered," but always striving. Nowhere is this more poignantly demonstrated than in the dance "Oh Sinner Man." Three bare-chested men in black pants tear across an open stage, their black figures stark against a crimson backdrop. They hurl themselves onto the floor and through the air with urgency, anger, and ambition. They are fleeing, like rebel slaves, escaping something terrible. They slide, leap, and race past themselves, literally breaking through and freeing themselves from the very steps that they are performing.

COURTESY ALVIN AILEY DANCE FOUNDATION

Members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in *Revelations*, 2001

Revelations is not just a powerful ballet: it created a new and distinctive style of dance. It looks so "mainstream" to our eyes that it is easy to forget the degree to which it stood apart from the work of Ailey's contemporaries in 1960. Martha Graham was still the main point of reference for modern dance in New York. She and her disciples continued to create dances based on her revolutionary technique, while other choreographers worked to extricate themselves from her influence and find their own styles. Still others rebelled completely and experimented with random movement and "everyday" pedestrian forms. But whatever their loyalties, these were all "serious" artists interested in questions of "art."

Ailey would have none of it. He was an unabashed populist: "I still dream that my folks down on the farm in Texas can come to an Ailey concert and know and appreciate what's happening onstage. That's my perception of what dance should be—a popular form wrenched from the hands of the elite." But he was not a "Broadway man." Though he had some experience working in black musicals, Ailey preferred to make dances rather than to collaborate in large song-and-dance productions. Nor did he belong with "black dance" innovators such as Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus, who studied and documented the dances of the Caribbean, Africa, and America and then used their scholarly knowledge to create theatrical forms. Ailey's style and artistic sensibilities come from somewhere else.

II.

Alvin Ailey was born in rural southeast Texas in 1931. His father disappeared when he was a young child, and his mother Lulu raised him. They were Baptists, black and poor. (The "little black churches" of *Revelations* came straight from his childhood experiences.) In 1942, his mother took him to Los Angeles, where she found work in the wartime defense industry, and they settled into a modest but stable life. It was there that Ailey became interested in theater. He saw movies (Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, the Nicholas Brothers, Bill Robinson), vaudeville acts (including Lena Horne, who later fondly nicknamed him "the earth man"), Duke Ellington, and Jack Cole. He saw the Ballets Russes and Katherine Dunham's company. A high school friend (Carmen de Lavallade) pushed him to study dance, and he came under the tutelage of the maverick dancer and choreographer Lester Horton.

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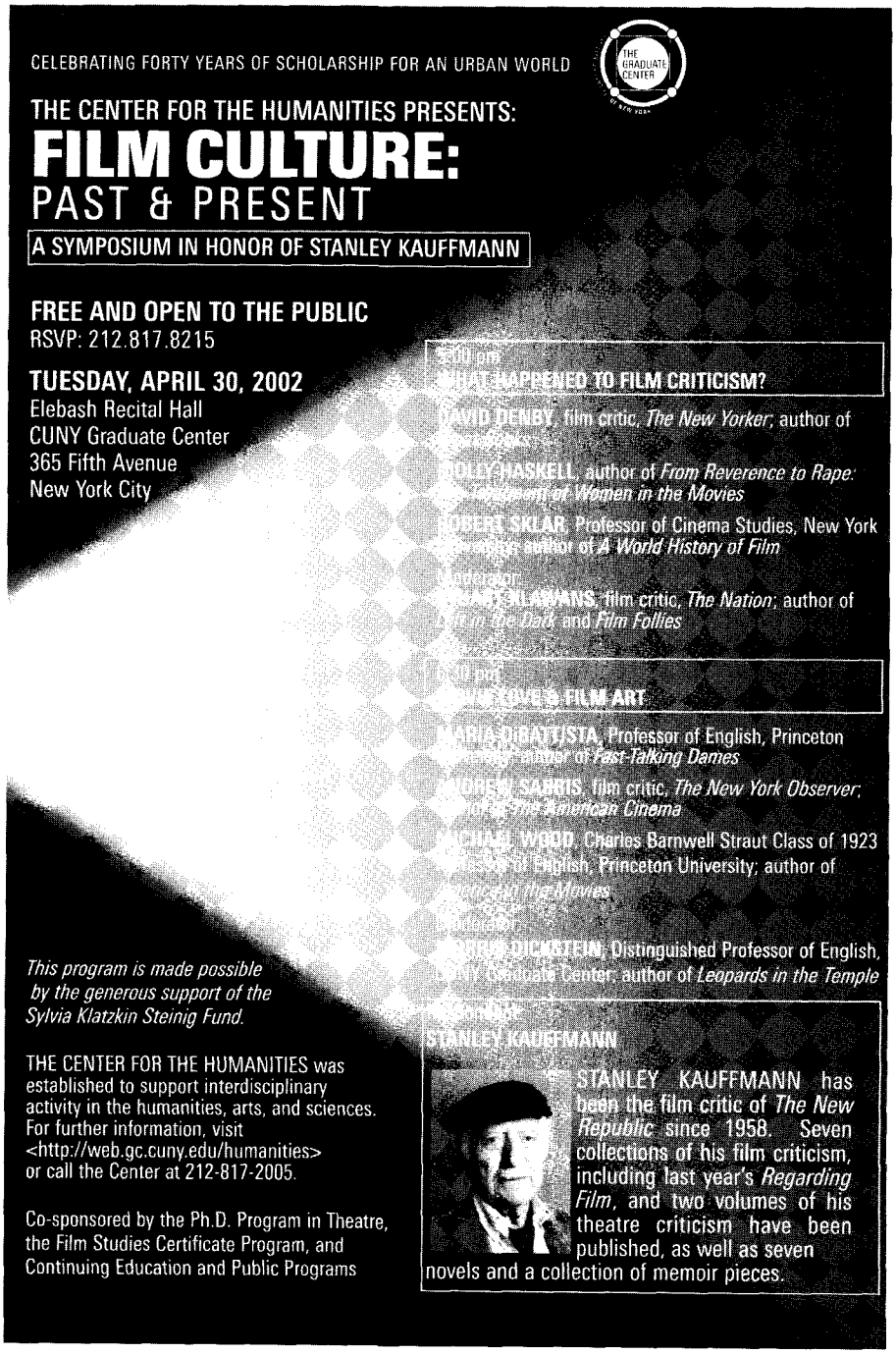
Horton became Ailey's mentor. As a young man, Horton had been influenced by modern dance pioneers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, whose distinctive brand of exotic cultural kitsch toured America in the 1920s. Like Shawn, Horton had a consuming interest in Native American culture. He researched its origins, documented "authentic" dances, designed costumes, and choreographed huge, garish productions, such as *The Song of Hiawatha* (1926), based on his findings. In the course of his career Horton would devote the same attention to the study of Mexican, Asian, and African American dance forms. He was intellectually voracious and fiercely independent, and he saw no contradiction in moving freely between concert dance and a variety of ethnic and vernacular forms.

Horton did his share of B-grade movies, sexy nightclub acts, and what he once called "fun" dances, but they did not interfere with his more serious pursuits. With a small group of devoted dancers and musicians, he developed a movement technique based on the anatomical geometry of the human body: he worked, as one of his dancers put it, "from the joint out." He was interested in isolating rational ways of moving each body part, and in defining ways that the human body could, for example, fall and rise from the floor. Horton searched for solutions that were explicitly not balletic. His movements were not necessarily centered in the trunk of the body, but could originate in a shoulder, an arm, a finger. The result was a style of movement that emphasized large shapes, hinges, and isolations. Horton technique remains, to this day, one of the basic languages of modern dance. A dancer trained in its precepts does not just learn steps; he is taught a body of knowledge, a rationally articulated system of movement. Ailey got this training.

In the 1940s and 1950s Ailey also worked with Jack Cole. Cole was an important force in the development of jazz dance and musical-theater dance. He worked with St. Denis and Shawn in the early 1930s, and like Horton he had a genuine interest in the dances of other cultures. He, too, researched and documented. He was one of the first to fit "authentic" Hindu and Native American (and other ethnic dances) to a jazz beat. But he opted out of theatrical dance and turned his knowledge instead to more lucrative venues: nightclubs (the Mob loved him) and Hollywood. Cole was interested in making dances that were accessible to "urban technically untrained folk." He was after a style that would have a "feeling of inarticulation"—no pirouettes, classical positions, or points. He wanted movement that people on the street could climb into and feel, even if they could not actually execute the steps. He was a consummate showman and a vicious perfectionist (Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse, who both worked with him, were pussycats by comparison). After Cole's death in 1974, Ailey devoted a season of work to his memory.

When Lester Horton died in 1953, Ailey took over the Horton company and began choreographing. He moved to New York in 1954, when he was offered a plum dancing role in the Broadway musical *House of Flowers*. Once in New York, Ailey studied everything. He explored the dance techniques of Graham, Doris Humphrey, Katherine Dunham, and Hanya Holm ("hated that"). He experimented with José Limón ("too much like ballet"). He took ballet with Karel Shook, one of the few teachers who would train blacks in classical technique back then. He tried method acting with Stella Adler and joined the left-wing New Dance Group, where he met Anna Sokolow and Sophie Maslow (and danced the role of an Israeli soldier in Maslow's choreography for the Chanukah Festival at Madison Square Garden in 1955).

When Ailey started his own company in New York in 1958, he did so with a particular mission, which is often overlooked today. His idea was to create an American repertory company that would show-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case the work of twentieth-century American modern dance choreographers. Here Ailey followed the example of Horton and Cole (and Dunham), though in a different key: he would gather, document, and display the significant dance movement that he saw around him. Ailey seems to have been keenly aware that he was living at an important juncture in the history of dance, and he wanted to bring these works and styles to "the people."

But which people? Today the Ailey company is usually thought of as "black." Yet this was not Ailey's intention. Since its inception, the company has performed the work of Lester Horton, John Butler, Glen Tetley, Joyce Tristler, Paul Sanasardo, Anna Sokolow, and many others. It has never been a company devoted exclusively to the work of Alvin Ailey, or to the work of black choreographers. On the subject of black dance Ailey was adamant:

> I feel an obligation to use black dancers because there must be more opportunities for them but not because I'm a black choreographer talking to black people.... *Revelations* comes from Negro spirituals and gospels. Its roots are in American Negro culture, which is part of the whole country's heritage....We talk too much of black art when we should be talking about art, just art.

And yet *Revelations* is also a black dance, and Ailey insisted on that, too. White dancers have (on occasion) performed major roles in the ballet, but Ailey never gave the work to a white company. "I'm not sure it would work," he once explained. "Certainly the personal identification would not be there: it would work as choreography, it would work as structure, as dance, but as far as its being a statement about the black experience—which is an important part of its ethos—it would be lost."

Revelations is "black" because Ailey fused form and content so completely that it was impossible to pull them apart: he created a black gospel style out of a universalizing modern dance technique. He studiously avoided references to minstrelsy, tap, West African movement, or other black dance traditions. It was the work's content that made the style seem "black." In this sense, *Revelations* was autobiographical: Ailey was a black man who grew up in the pre-civil-rights South and was no stranger to the uglier forms of racism. But he made his way in a branch of modern dance that regarded itself as universal: here he found a home, a discipline, an ambition.

If *Revelations* was Ailey's signature piece, it was his ball and chain, too. He had trouble creating other dances of equal power and popularity. The strength of *Revelations* is also its greatest liability: the evangelical verve and black spiritual zeal of the steps make *Revelations* a powerful piece of choreography, but as a language it is severely limited. *Revelations* may have defined the "Ailey style," but Ailey could not extract a workable technique from his own masterwork. He had locked himself into a genre of his own making: the dance sermon only worked to communicate certain kinds of messages. The movement was too simple. The steps were too imbued with a heightened, aspiring physicality; they looked awkward and overwrought in less fervent settings. Much of Ailey's later work seems saturated with misplaced poetic feeling.

Cry is the only Ailey ballet that comes close to matching *Revelations*. It is a solo dance to songs by Alice Coltrane, Laura Nyro, and Chuck Griffin that Ailey choreographed in 1971. It, too, fuses narrative, strong black content, and clear, passionate exposition. The piece is dedicated to "all Black women everywhere—especially our mothers." It was Ailey's gift to his mother. It was also his gift to Judith Jamison, a young dancer who first made her name with her passionate performance in *Cry*.

Cry is in the *Revelations* genre, but it is different in crucial ways. It is angrier, more defiant, less redemptive. Ailey noted that at one point in the dance he imagined the woman as a slave on an auction block—but a slave fully aware of her own dignity, and of the barbarity of her subjugation. At another moment, when the dancer falls to her knees and scrubs the floor in apparent despair and sadness, Ailey saw her actually wiping up blood. If *Revelations* has the tone of Martin Luther King Jr., *Cry* is more attuned to Malcolm X. In *Cry*, the familiar *Revelations* vocabulary is edged with Africa: loose, jointy steps, whipping head rolls, and a general release into West African style make the dance strong, and politically charged.

III.

TODAY, *CRY* AND *Revelations* have changed. The steps are the same, but *Revelations* in particular has taken on a hard, glossy finish that makes it strangely difficult to enter. This season it was precisely executed and the dancers were extraordinarily good, but the spirit was wrong. The gutsy, devotional quality of the ballet has been redirected. *Revelations* is no longer about "the small black churches." It is now about itself. The dancers worship the ballet rather than the impulse behind it. They revel in the movement rather than defining its texture. Their emphasis is on victory and self-realization: they seem to be (perish the thought) "empowered" by *Revelations*, and the "Ailey style" has become brashly self-congratulatory.

One possible explanation for the change is Judith Jamison. Jamison took over the direction of the company upon Ailey's death in 1989. She is as capable and charismatic a leader as she was a dancer; but she no more shares Ailey's vision than she does his biography. Born in Philadelphia to a middle-class family in 1943, she grew up surrounded by high culture. Her parents encouraged her interests in opera, music, art, and dance. She studied piano, was inspired by Marian Anderson, and loved Leonard Bernstein's Young People's concerts. She took ballet and wanted to become a ballerina. But ballet was notoriously segregated and she was repeatedly rejected. This heightened Jamison's awareness of the racism visited daily on her family; but she was spared the harsh pre-civil-rights violations that were common currency in Ailey's childhood. She endured humiliations of a lesser order.

Is it humiliation that has made Jamison so preoccupied with appearance, etiquette, and pride? Her autobiography, *Dancing Spirit*, reveals a strong interest in her African roots. She identifies with the Peul Tribe from Senegal: they look like her. She sees the world through the lens of race. When she visited Russia she was eager to visit the Pushkin Museum, because she had been told that the great Russian poet was "descended from an African." She is touchy: one of her "biggest peeves" is when acquaintances feign familiarity and call her "Judi." She explains: "I think my feeling for this comes from the days when slaves were called by their first names to further strip away their remaining dignity." Later in the book she describes a visit to Gorée Island in Senegal, where blacks were held in dungeons before being shipped into slavery. She was moved: "You don't even have to try to cry, because we've been through it for such a long time, so that it's blood. You don't have to make an effort to remember. It's in your genes."

And so we find ourselves smack in the middle of African American identity politics. Ailey was an artist who was black; Jamison is a black woman who is an artist. Yet it was Ailey who created a powerful and beautiful ballet about the black experience, and it is Jamison who reads Ailey's work as an essay on personal fulfillment. "*Revelations*," she says, "is just a reflection of the journey we all take in life, which has its ups and downs—and, hopefully like the ballet, ends rather triumphantly. Like many of Alvin's works, it's a ballet about people who survive. I think we all like to see ourselves as

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survivors, with much hope and many tomorrows...." Here we have *Revelations* stripped of the "soul of black folk" and reduced to an altogether less distinguished trope: pop psychology.

WHAT ABOUT NEW work? The contemporary ballets featured by the Ailey company this season were depressing evidence that whatever good might have come from the Ailey tradition is being bartered away to racial politics. Instead of a durable, accessible grammar of movement, we get strings of superficial, skin-deep, body-beautiful images: an obsession with looks. And "black" has become a political tool rather than a subject for aesthetic consideration.

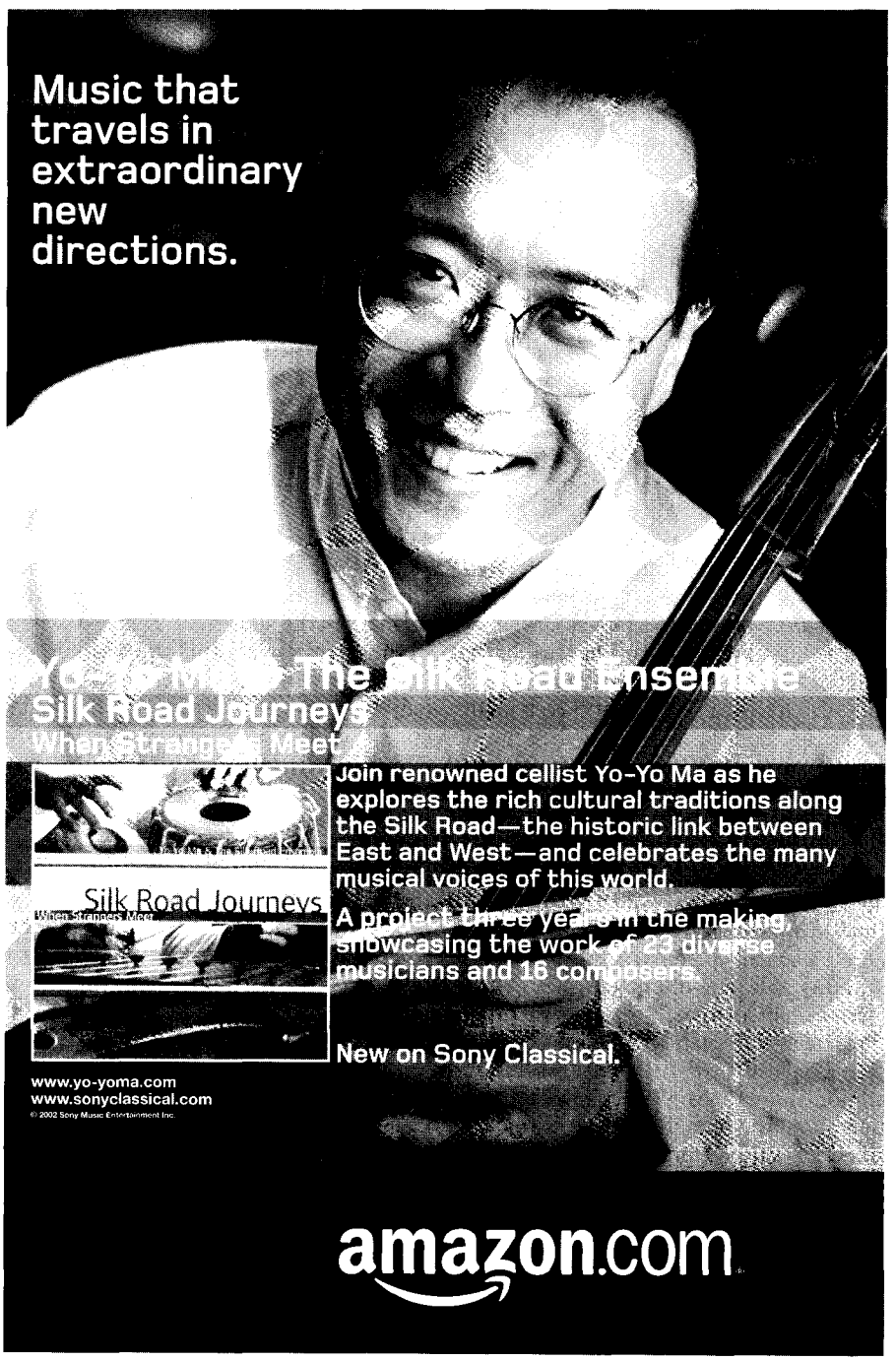
The current impasse might have been avoided had it not been for the untimely death of Ulysses Dove in 1999. Dove had the talent and the drive to take the Ailey tradition forward. He worked closely with Ailey, and his dances have the geometrical lucidity and the narrative structure so characteristic of Ailey's best work. Dove made hard-driving, highly structured, guttural pieces, such as *Episodes* and *Vespers*. They are serious and stylish, and they still bring out the best in the Ailey dancers.

But Judith Jamison's new work, *Here... Now*, shows just how little she understands the language that she has inherited. Jamison was one of the great performers of our time, but her choreography is flaccid, showy, lacking in rigor. The piece, to a wonderful score by Wynton Marsalis, was created in anticipation of the Salt Lake City Olympics as a tribute to Florence Griffith-Joyner. The movement is a vague combination of generic Aileyesque "modern dance" with allusions to track and field. The composition is grand but utterly incomprehensible, an array of unconnected poses and sporty costumes. The dances are taut, plastic-faced expositions, void of inner life and illumination. The dancers look wooden and strangely unphysical. It is a ballet in two dimensions, a pompous (and boring) parade of glossy images.

This fascination with sleek images and external forms can lead to a hard-edged cynicism. Donald Byrd's *Dance at the Gym* (1991) and Dwight Rhoden's *Chocolate Sessions* (2000) are sexy, street-beat ballets that owe a lot to hip-hop, funk, and various kinds of club dance. *Dance at the Gym* is meant to be a contemporary take on the same scene from Jerome Robbins's *West Side Story*. Byrd wants to show the difference between young people then and now, and the ballet is unwitting testimony to the lost art of seduction: Robbins's Latin flirtations are reduced to sex and attitude. These couples, in bras, midriffs, and tight unitards, confront, assail, and wrench their hard bodies to a booming bass line and strobe-like light. At the end of the piece, two dancers stand center stage and make out. Is today's "gym" really so emotionally and physically monochrome?

Rhoden's *Chocolate Sessions* is more sinewy and balletic, but it has the same skimpy, camp-leather look with strutting couples in aggressive poses. Popular culture has often been a valuable resource for theater dance, but today's black street styles seem to inspire narrow-minded, anti-lyrical dances that truncate choreographic possibilities rather than expand them. When dancers move with such in-your-face resolve, subtlety is impossible. The beat is too monotonous, the volume too high, the movement too one-dimensional. Over and again, the result puts posturing above thinking and feeling.

For Rhoden, this kind of dance jargon is more than style. It is a political proposition. Rhoden was a principal dancer with the Ailey company, and he now co-directs his own company, Complexions, with the former Ailey dancer Desmond Richardson. Complexions styles itself a "global" company: the dancers, we are told, "are a representative microcosm of global unity," which seems to mean that they are racially diverse and from a variety of artistic backgrounds. Does it matter that we see "multi-colored" bodies on stage? Not really. Their stage "identities" come not from their skin, but from their training,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which is not "global" at all. In fact, they are a group of highly accomplished ballet and Ailey-trained dancers who fuse flashy pop fashions with what is fast becoming a jet-set international ballet style.

But Rhoden is really more interested in production values than in choreography. His new piece, *Higher Ground*, to music by Earth, Wind, and Fire, is "dedicated to Alvin, George, Louis, Milton, and Talley." Is *this* what he most prizes from his distinguished heritage? The piece is a throwback to the worst of the self-indulgent me-generation era: the dancers party it up to flashing lights and get-down beats—and we are made to watch. Sure, they can flaunt, strut, and roll in a mishmash nightclub fashion, but who cares? "Global," it seems, really means the triumph of super-style over substance. Complexions is peddling a grandiose MTV universalism with dubious human content: www.fiber-optic-bodies/techno-dance.com.

IV.

JAMISON IS ALSO commissioning work from artists who come from outside the Ailey fold. Indeed, the most promising work of the Ailey season came from Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Ronald K. Brown. Both are artists who self-consciously plumb their blackness. For inspiration and vocabulary they look primarily to West Africa, the Caribbean, and the African American community, but they also have training in various styles of American modern dance. They are interested in communities, folklore, ritual, and (especially in Brown's case) spirituality.

Zollar restaged her 1988 dance *Shelter* for the Ailey company this season. The ballet, to music by Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn, was originally created for Urban Bush Women, her own company. Danced here by an all-male cast, the piece is a morality tale about homelessness ("the face of homelessness," she says, "we often think of as a black man"). There is a narrative, voiced over the music in grand, admonishing tones. We begin with a section about the homeless, suffering on the sidewalks of the Upper East Side in New York City; then we move to Africa ("long ago, long time ago...") to find integrity and wisdom; then we are back on the sordid streets of New York. The narrative beats us over the head with the injustice of poverty, and how any one of us might suddenly find ourselves on the street, "between a rock and a hard place, at the intersection of reduced resources and reverberating rage." Fingers are pointed (at the audience). Then we switch to the environment and how we are polluting the earth. The ballet ends with a dancer pointing ominously at the audience: "endangered species: HUMAN BEINGS." The story is a bit confused, but the moral is crystal clear: America corrupts, Africa redeems.

If we were not so battered by the preachy political jargon, we might notice that the choreography is quite interesting, especially in the "Africa" section of the piece. Zollar builds a fluid amalgam of loose, weighted movements from African dance styles mixed with the high-pitched clarity and athleticism so characteristic of the Ailey dancers. The result is stunning in its virtuosity. But alas, her politics undermines the interesting and complicated story told in the movement. Zollar has often made righteous (especially racial) politics a choreographic premise. This, after all, is the woman who once brought us "Batty Moves," a piece that, she says, "affirms the beauty and importance of the behind in Black culture. Batty is Jamaican slang for behind." And we are meant to care?

Zollar is not alone in her interest in West African culture as a fount of wisdom and artistic inspiration. The hottest ticket in the Ailey season was Ronald K. Brown's new work *Serving Nia*. Brown does not come from Ailey. He studied with former Graham dancer Mary Anthony and spent several years dancing with Jennifer Muller's more lyrical company The Works. But mainly he has made his way as a choreographer and director of his own company, Ronald K. Brown/Evidence. He is interested in creating "a dance folklore for the Afro-American community," and his work draws heavily on West African forms, blended with contemporary American idioms.

In 1999, Brown choreographed *Grace* as a tribute to Alvin Ailey. It was performed by the Ailey company again this season, to many ovations. The piece pays fitting homage to the evangelism at the heart of the Ailey tradition: *Grace* is pure whites, jet reds, and physical exaltation. Yet the movement is not clear, linear, or defined; limbs fly off in multiple directions, bodies are low to the ground, centered but free, loose and lashing. The stomping legs and fierce repetition of the movement make a mesmerizing dance. It is a piece that depends on color, light, and the feverish, escalating energy of the dancers for success: the steps are redundant, and there is no story save "going to God."

Serving Nia is *Grace* in more subdued clothing—humble rather than epiphanic. And it fails, for a very Aileyesque reason: the celebratory, ritualistic African-based movement that drives *Grace* loses its luster in the new context. In *Serving Nia*, the movement looks monotonous and diffuse. Like most social dance forms, it lacks the complexity and variety necessary to carry a theatrical experience; its simplicity is its downfall. We tire of the sameness, of the trope of African wisdom, of the intense piety.

But Brown's talent is not best represented by the sleek dancers of the Ailey company. In a performance at Aaron Davis Hall, his own company went about their work quietly and calmly, with a stronger sense of purpose. Suddenly the flash, glitter, and *Ebony Magazine* veneer fell away, and we were in the presence of a group of dedicated, physically intelligent dancers. The language was the same African/modern/club dance fusion, but the look was utterly different. In its best moments,

Midsummer, Georgia Avenue

Happiness: a high, wide porch, white columns
crowned by the crepe-paper party hats
of hibiscus; a rocking-chair; iced tea; a book;
an afternoon in late July to read it,
or read the middle of it, having leisure
to mark the place and enter it tomorrow
just as you left it (knock-knock of woodpecker
keeping yesterday's time, cicada's buzz,
the turning of another page, and somewhere
a question raised and dropped, the pendulum-
swing of a wind-chime). Back and forth, the rocker
and the reading eye, and isn't half

your jittery, odd joy the looking out
now and again across the road to where,
under the lush allees of long-lived trees
conferring shade and breeze on those who feel
none of it, a hundred stories lie confined
to their single page of stone? Oh, it's not far,
the distance between you and them: a breath,
a heartbeat, one more word in your two-faced
book that invites you to its party only
to sadden you it's over. And so you stay
on your teetering perch, you move and go nowhere,
gazing past the heat-struck street that's split

down the middle—not to put too fine
a point on it—by a double yellow line.

Mary Jo Salter

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there was synergy and sympathy in the movement. It was less wild, more focused; less ego, more work.

The strongest piece on the Evidence program was *High Life*, a choreographic study of the migration of black Americans to the North, and of Africans from villages to urban centers. The sections about the African American experience are sharp and affecting. Like Ailey, Brown is interested in narrative (the piece begins with a rhythmic slave auction, "Bid 'em in, git 'em in . . ."), and in descriptive movements (the dancers seem to be eternally walking, dragging suitcases, passing through). Brown abstracts traces of gestures, fragments of colloquial style, and threads them through the body: little stories and intimate details flow through the dancers' musculature. The movement builds quietly from within the body, winding hints of thoughts with allusions to history in complicated physical and spatial patterns that seem utterly natural.

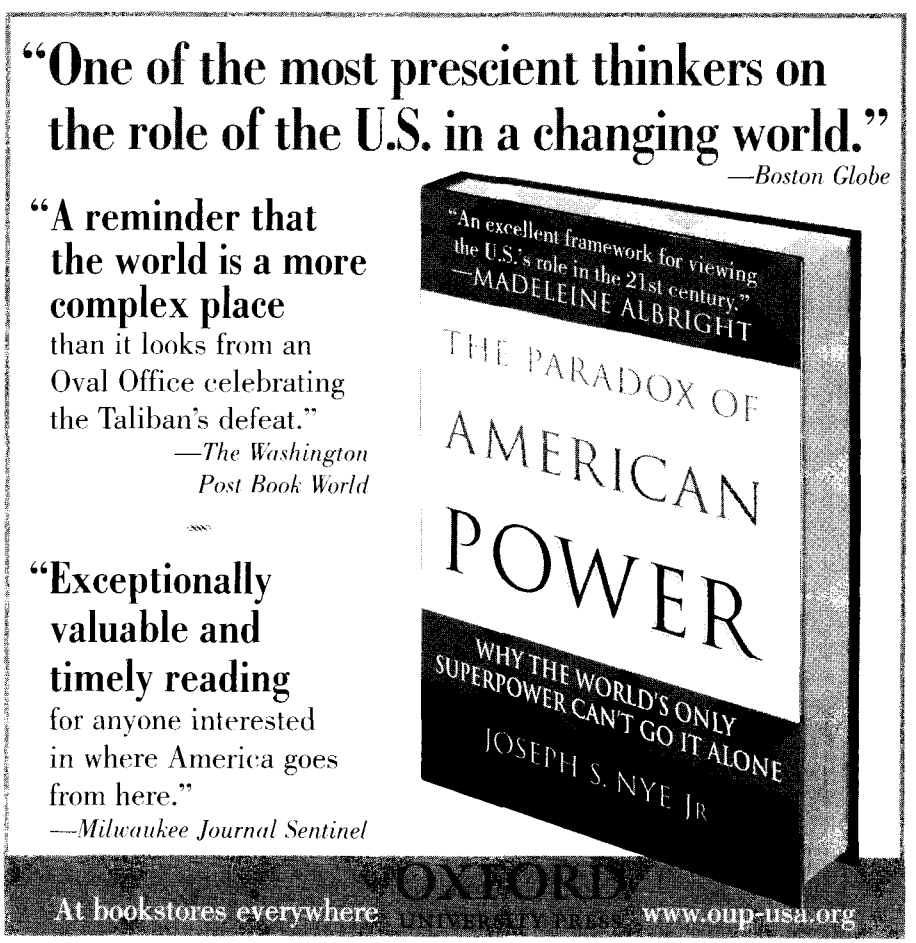
The Africa sections are less convincing. Here Brown reverts to a vague, monolithic look, as if he had less feel for the texture of that experience. The characters look unflatteringly stereotypical: dusty men and women trudging with sacks and breaking into hot flashes of dance for no apparent reason. By setting African and American migrations side by side, Brown posits a historical and emotional continuity—a "shared aspiration" (as the program notes put it) between blacks here and blacks there. But the nature of the linkage is left unexplored. Structurally, we move back and forth, but only structurally. If anything, the piece highlights differences more than similarities: in the distinct music and movement we see the lack of intersection, the divergent ethos of each experience. The pairing is gratuitous and obscure.

UNLESS, OF COURSE, the point is political. For these days an interest in African cultural forms slips easily into a disturbing aesthetic separatism. This was painfully clear at a recent meeting of the International Association of Blacks in Dance, hosted by Ronald K. Brown/Evidence in New York. The IABD was founded in 1988 to facilitate the work of black dance professionals around the world. It is a trans-national organization committed to "documenting and addressing Black aesthetics in dance." What does this mean? At a session devoted to the "heritage of Black dance" there was a long discussion about the need for an archive to document "the black tradition" in dance. The tone of the discussion was troubling. A young woman complained bitterly that some of Pearl Primus's papers had recently been given to the American Dance Festival, in North Carolina: "that is *our* legacy, not ADF's legacy." There was general agreement, and most of the members present seemed to feel it would be important to have their "own" archive, even though the ADF archives are carefully curated and open to dancers and scholars of all nations.

Were the participants at the meeting suggesting that we separate the African American experience from its national context, and see it instead as part of the "African diaspora"? Is it not racist to define a tradition by the skin color of its practitioners rather than by the history that made it possible? Primus, to take just one example, was trained in American anthropology and modern dance. She had deep and enduring commitments to Africa and the Caribbean, to be sure; but she was based in New York and she performed around the world. She inspired whites as well as blacks with the caliber of her artistry and her scholarship (myself among them: her work led me to study dance anthropology). Her work was powerful, but not because it was black.

The issue is not academic. In a recent documentary film called *Standing on the Edge, We Dance*, Joan Meyers Brown, founder of IABD and director of the dance company Philadanco, complained that promoters often ask her how her company compares to the Ailey company or to Dallas Black Dance Theater. This offends her: they ought to ask how her group compares to Paul Taylor's or Eliot Feld's, not just to other "black" dance companies. She rightly insists that she be judged by the highest aesthetic criteria in the land. But that means belonging to a broader tradition, and not divorcing "black dance" from American modern dance. If it is integrated, it can be judged. If it is separate, it cannot be equal.

The uncomfortable irony is that some of today's best work comes from artists involved in this separatist politics. Ronald K. Brown has rejected slick MTV global fashions; he has softened rock-hard street styles with loose-limbed West African flexibility; and he has created serious work that pushes dancers past ego. He seems to have found, in African forms, a source of genuine artistic values. There is nothing new in this. He, after all, stands in a long American tradition of artists interested in the history and aesthetics of black experience. Dunham, Primus, McKayle, Ailey, Fagan, and many others have used this experience to make urgent, full-bodied art. Nor is there anything new in the element of protest implicit in Brown's art. His vision of community, expressed in his dancers' commitments to each other and to their work, stands opposed to the fast and facile media culture that has much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of America in a stranglehold. But there is also something new in Brown's work: an element of withdrawal, a retreat into vague spirituality and poorly articulated aspirations that undercuts his otherwise firm, rooted aesthetic.

The problem facing African American artists today is that identity politics advocates retreat as a form of engagement: retreat from America into an aloof, anachronistic, racially defined never-never land; retreat from a nuanced use of Afro-Caribbean aesthetics into a flat idealization of blackness as an anti-American utopia; retreat from the soulful, historically textured aspirations of *Revelations* into skin-deep, high-resolution images of black pride. The vitality of twentieth-century American dance owes much to the clash of distinct cultural forms, but when diversity means going our own racially determined ways, conversations are ended and the American tradition is impoverished. *Revelations* was black, *and* American, *and* substantive, *and* engaged. No wonder it was so popular. ■

The Torture Wars

By MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Algeria, 1955–1957 by General Paul Aussaresses

(Enigma Books, 250 pp., $25)

I.

SUPPOSE YOU HAVE credible information that a bomb is about to go off, and you have detained suspects who may be able to tell you when and where it will explode. If they won't talk, do you torture them? This "ticking-bomb test" is intended to put human rights and other forms of Kantian good intentions under pressure, to see whether you will stand by the principle never to use human beings merely as a means even when hurting one person might save thousands of others.

The question is not merely a philosophical one. In recent weeks Alan Dershowitz and Jonathan Alter have speculated publicly about the necessity of torturing terrorist suspects—under judicial warrant, of course—if torture is the only way to obtain information that may prevent future attacks. "If we want to prevent the death of hundreds of innocent people by subjecting one guilty person to non-lethal pain," Dershowitz recently wrote, "then we must find a way to justify this exception to the otherwise blanket prohibition against torture." If, in August 2001, we had used torture on Zacarias Moussaoui, the man who is accused of having been the twentieth member of Mohammed Atta's team of hijackers, who is now awaiting trial in Virginia federal court, could we have averted the attacks? Should Abu Zubaydah, Al Qaeda's chief of operations, now in custody, be tortured to disclose information on future operations, or on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden?

On the face of it, hurting a single person in order to save the lives of thousands of people sounds like the kind of hard choice that is beloved by the tough-minded realist. It may seem this way until it is remembered that the ticking-bomb experiment turns out to be the rationale of torturers everywhere. In French Algeria, for example, the ticking-bomb test was always used by the old hands to overcome the scruples of the new recruits in the torture cells of the French prefectures and barracks. When Army Captain Paul Aussaresses first arrived in Algeria in 1954 and discovered that the French police were regularly torturing suspects, one policeman took him out for a pastis at a local bar and told him that moral scruple about inflicting pain was not the real issue. The real choice was this: "Torture a suspected terrorist or tell the parents of the victims that it is better to let scores of innocent people be killed rather than make a single accomplice suffer."

Even people who detest torture might be prepared to do it once, rather than have to explain themselves to the grieving victims of an atrocity. Yet single examples, taken in isolation, falsify the problem. In the ticking-bomb example, you are asked to decide only once in order to avert a single incident of clear and present danger. But that is almost never the real issue. In the real life of institutions, once you have made the first decision to torture, it is but a short step until you are asked to do so again.

What may have begun as an exceptional instance, justified by exceptional circumstances, will rapidly become a policy. The new recruit who rationalized torture at the beginning as a single act of cruelty designed to protect his loved ones soon finds that he is complicit in a banal routine of everyday horror. This was precisely what happened in Algeria: initial justifications of the exception ended up justifying a rule, and those who overcame their scruples just once found themselves in an infernal machine, unable to escape.

American policemen regularly interrogate suspects, and use intimidation, physical pressure, and threats to break down alibis, excuses, or lies. This is not pretty, but it usually stays just short of torture. If we were to change the rules and allow torture for a category of suspected terrorists, how would we prevent torture from being applied to break down suspects in cases—say, the murder of children—where the police have strong feelings of detestation for the suspect in question? If we deal with this problem by erecting institutional firewalls around torture, handing terrorist suspects over to special interrogators and special agencies, how do we keep these special units under executive and legal control?

Alan Dershowitz believes that requiring police to seek a "torture warrant" every time they need to torture a suspect would not only keep the practice under control but even reduce the use of torture. A torture warrant is supposed to act like a search warrant. The problem is that torture is harder to control than searches. How can a judge define in advance how much torture is enough? The heart of the problem of torture is institutional: how do you keep control of it once you have let it out of the box? As reports by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem show, in Israel it has proved difficult to keep the use of physical force in interrogation under effective judicial and executive control.

The thought experiment also falsely assumes that torture will unlock the necessary knowledge in a timely fashion. But if you have suspects who will not talk in normal interrogations, it is likely that they will resist torture as long as possible. If they hold out long enough, you will have the worst of all worlds: a suspect tortured to death and a stadium full of dead bodies. That, of course, may be precisely what terrorists intend. In this way torture may play into the hands of terrorists.

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Torture is fundamentally a political strategy. Generally, it is not used, as the thought experiment supposes, to save lives, but to break the will of political opponents. Whenever a state is locked in an ongoing battle of wills with a terrorist group, the purpose of torture soon ceases to be the extraction of information alone. Its objective becomes to spread fear, to reduce the number of people willing to work for terror organizations. That is the basic reason why torture metastasizes so rapidly from the exception to the rule. And the natural strategy of terrorists is to respond in kind. If you want to make more terrorists, one sure way to do so—the French in Algeria would be the example here—is to torture more suspects.

THINKING THAT TORTURE will help us in a war against terror also falsifies what our problem is. We think that our problem is information, and so we need torture to get the truth. In reality, before September 11 there was plenty of information in the possession of the American authorities (noise, but no signal). No, our problem is not a problem of knowledge. It is a problem of belief. It is not what terrorists know that makes them dangerous; it is what they believe. And beliefs cannot be changed by physical duress. Indeed, they may be reinforced. Those who survive torture become living monuments to the brutality that has been inflicted upon them. If they die under torture, they become martyrs to their cause.

Any counter-terror campaign is a battle to persuade as well as to dissuade. Terrorists do need to know that what they believe about us is false. They believe that we are weak and will not fight; and so we should prove them wrong. They believe that we are hypocrites; and so they need to know that we actually believe in the constitutional prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. They need to know all this if we are to win. Winning is about not losing our nerve, about not losing control in the face of provocation. The military logic of terror is to provoke us into reciprocal atrocity that will lose us the war for legitimacy and the war for opinion.

The barbarians who kidnapped Daniel Pearl undoubtedly tortured him. He was subjected to indecent abuse, followed by horrifying death, because he was an American and a Jew. It is hard not to want to do the same in return, but it would be a mistake. Torturing his captors would set in motion an escalation of reprisals that would probably end up jeopardizing the life of every American in Pakistan. The people who killed Pearl may have violated all humane norms, but we have strong prudential reasons for holding on to these norms, even when our enemies do not.

Controlling the impulse to escalate in a counter-terror campaign is not easy, but other countries have shown that it can be done. British interrogation techniques in Northern Ireland in the early years of the Troubles did fall foul of the European Convention on Human Rights. Then the British realized that their methods were losing them important friends abroad, not to mention the support of the Catholic population in Belfast. Over time, they shifted from interrogation under duress to signal interception and infiltration, and managed to gain the upper hand. Information was never effective enough to prevent all bombings: mistakes and tragedies occurred, but each bombing ended up with the terrorists slowly losing public support.

STILL, IF TERROR has to be fought with military means, then why is it acceptable to kill terrorists and not to torture them? First, it has to be said that it is not always acceptable to kill terrorist suspects. It all depends on the circumstances. It is one thing to send Special Forces units to Afghanistan to hunt down and to kill terrorist fighters, such as those of Al Qaeda. It would be quite another to send Special Forces to eliminate suspects in some hideout in Barcelona, Hamburg, or London. Shoot-to-kill policies would violate a suspect's rights to the presumption of innocence. (Yes, even terrorists have rights.)

Britain learned the cost of shoot-to-kill strategies when it dispatched an assassination squad to pick off terrorist suspects in Gibraltar in 1988. The squad shot some suspects in broad daylight, but a military success turned into a political setback when the European Court ruled that the shootings violated the European Convention on Human Rights. Besides, in countries with adequate legal and police systems and extradition arrangements with the United States, a shoot-to-kill policy would be unnecessary. On the other hand, in Afghanistan, where terrorists have formed themselves into military units and have already struck against the United States, Americans have little choice but to take them on with military force and to kill them in combat.

If we can kill warrior terrorists in combat, why can't we torture sleeper terrorists when we capture them in our midst? But the situation is not so simple. If we are at war, then the ethics of war apply. The basic principle of those ethics is: kill if you have to kill, but do not inflict unnecessary suffering. A warrior kills his enemy as efficiently as possible. A barbarian seeks to inflict suffering. This moral distinction is not just a warrior's code of honor, dependent on reciprocity among fellow warriors. It is meant to apply also in the conduct of warriors toward civilians, and even toward barbarians. A soldier who would not hesitate to kill an enemy has good reason to have additional scruples about torturing him.

There is something about inflicting suffering, even for the extraction of useful information, that exposes those who act in our name to unnecessary moral harm. We may not feel any tenderness toward terrorist suspects, but we should feel special concern for our own agents. Torture is a face-to-face activity. As Wislawa Szymborska has written, it is highly dependent on the human capacity for empathy:

> The body is painful,
> it must eat, breathe air, and sleep,
> it has thin skin, with blood right beneath,
> it has a goodly supply of teeth and nails,
> its bones are brittle, its joints extensible.
> In torture, all this is taken into account.

If a good torturer must be able to imagine, with some precision, what pain must be like for another human being, then we can only imagine what inner violence the torturer must do to deafen his own instincts to the screams that he causes. Over time, when torture becomes routine, it creates dead souls. To the degree that we care about causing moral hazard, we should be concerned about exposing our own citizens to the face-to-face infliction of pain. To advocate torture, in other

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words, we must be willing to ask another person to do it in our name and to be scarred by it. This is the deontological ditch—not just the harm done to the victim, but the harm done to the perpetrator—that I, for one, would prefer not to cross.

II.

All of these preliminary thoughts about torture, it might be said, do not escape the frame of the thought experiment. They, too, remain abstract and unreal and high-minded. We need the test of relevant historical contexts, which might offer credible examples where, despite what liberals may think, torture actually works. The central case here is Algeria.

Although successive French governments from the 1950s right up to the present administration have denied that torture was anything but an exceptional and sadistic abuse by particular individuals, the evidence is overwhelming that torture was a systemic and central tool in the French struggle against Algerian independence. One obvious reason for this practice was racism, linked to fear. The belief that those whom you torture do not quite belong to the same human race certainly helps when you are applying the electrodes. It is a general rule that torture anchors itself in situations—apartheid South Africa, for example—in which one race or ethnic group is trying to keep another group down by force.

From a strategic point of view, the rationale for torture in these racially charged situations is rather the same as the rationale for terror. It becomes rational to torture when the group that you are trying to control outnumbers your forces and when that group appears to have you on the run, just as it can seem rational to resort to terror when the state you are opposing has such a preponderant advantage of force that only asymmetrical assault will make a difference. Both torture and terror are the weapons of the weak.

The French might have decided that a better response to Algerian demands for self-determination would be to win Algerians over to some continuing association with France, just as the Algerian FLN movement might have decided that nonviolent public demonstrations, strikes, and sit-ins would build a better case for freedom than the random butchery of settlers. There was nothing inevitable about the descent into the inferno. As Alistair Horne's exemplary history of the Algerian war, *A Savage War of Peace*, makes clear, even as late as 1958 thousands of Muslim Algerians greeted Charles de Gaulle's historic visit to Algiers with joy, believing that some kind of association between France and a free Algeria could be achieved without more violence. Indeed, one of the key lessons of the Algerian war is that the state counter-terror actions have to maintain control of the escalation gradient. Terrorists deliberately seek to provoke ever more extreme reactions in order to foreclose peaceful alternatives. The state party that succumbs to this provocation rapidly loses control of the capacity to control its own violence or the violence of the other side.

By launching attacks on French settlers on May 9, 1945, the Algerian independence movement set in motion the brutal reprisals of Setif that confirmed the FLN in its determination to resort to terror. Reprisal, torture, and killing by both sides became the inexorable consequences of the initial choice of violence. The violence that the FLN used in its freedom struggle provoked French retaliation, and the French response provoked violence from the Algerians. In the end, the side that prevailed was the one that had the capacity to absorb the most punishment. This turned out to be (as could have been predicted from the beginning) the side that was fighting for its freedom on its own native soil.

In the years since Algerian independence in 1962, it has become conventional in the center of French public opinion to believe that torture helped to lose Algeria. It disgraced the country, hardened Algerian hatreds, and did not stop the independence movement. This view was always contested at the margins by Jean-Marie Le Pen's right-wing political followers, and by the Algerian *pieds noirs* who went into exile in France after 1962. They have always believed that France lost Algeria not because it was too brutal, but because it was not brutal enough.

This view found a recent champion in the person of a retired French general named Paul Aussaresses, who had been a captain in the French special services attached to the French army in Algeria between 1955 and 1957. In a memoir published in France last year and now translated into English, Aussaresses wrote that he routinely tortured suspects and killed them afterwards, and also ordered and supervised reprisals of civilians after FLN terrorist attacks. His military and police superiors in Algiers explicitly approved all of these actions, and the French government—including François Mitterrand, the French minister of the interior at the time and later president of France—knew what he was doing.

It was not the revelations themselves that caused the scandal. The use of torture was widely denounced by many French intellectuals. What was distinctive about Aussaresses was his jaunty impudence about the whole issue, his insistence that he had no regrets and that he would do it again in the context of the contemporary war on terrorism. When his American publisher got him onto *60 Minutes* and Mike Wallace asked the inevitable question—should the United States torture Zacarias Moussaoui and other suspected terrorist detainees to force them to disclose future plots?—Aussaresses replied: "It seems to me that it's obvious."

Aussaresses's perky refusal to apologize for torture outraged human rights groups in France. They launched a successful prosecution to have him convicted of "justifying war crimes." While it was ludicrous for human rights groups to be on the side of the restraint of free speech, their campaign was driven by the belief that with Le Pen still a factor in French electoral politics, it was essential to deny reactionary revisionism any further prestige with the public. Le Pen fought in Algeria, and Aussaresses mentions his service record there with approval.

As the historian William Cohen has shown in a recent study, while President Chirac has apologized publicly for Vichy and for French complicity in the dispatch of French Jews to concentration camps, both he and the rest of the French political class remain much less willing to admit the stain on French honor represented by the Algerian war. The reasons for this are complicated, but they include the electoral weight of the aging *pieds noirs* and their descendants, together with large numbers of aging Frenchmen who did their military service in Algeria. In publishing his memoir, Aussaresses perhaps gambled on this equivocal attitude on the part of French authorities. He gambled wrong. He was convicted of defending war crimes in public, ordered to pay a fine, and stripped of his Légion d'Honneur. And instead of being bowed or broken by the backlash against him, Aussaresses seemed to bask in his obloquy.

It is easy to see why. As he tells it, the same tender liberal hypocrites who judge him now were responsible for France's losing Algeria. Most Frenchmen wanted to keep Algeria French, but they did not have the stomach to will the necessary means. Aussaresses prides himself on being one of the few moral realists with the inner toughness to do what had to be done. "What I did in Algeria was undertaken for my country in good faith, even though I didn't enjoy it. One must never regret anything accomplished in the line of a duty one believes in." Instead of bowing before liberal opinion, he taunts it:

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> The methods I used were always the same: beatings, electric shocks, and in particular water torture, which was the most dangerous technique for the prisoner. It never lasted for more than one hour and the suspects would speak in the hope of saving their lives. They would therefore either talk quickly or never.

Aussaresses's most challenging claim is that all this routinized brutality actually worked. According to his account, the systematic torture of the FLN cadre inside the Algiers casbah between 1955 and 1957 broke the cells of the organization one by one and gradually freed the city of terror attacks. By the end of the campaign against the casbah, where torture was used to break the entire network of Ali la Pointe and his gang, peace had returned to Algiers.

Aussaresses writes as if the French won in Algeria. Actually, all he is entitled to claim is that torture momentarily broke the back of the FLN cells in one city, Algiers, for a period of a few years. He seems to forget that the French ultimately lost, decisively and irrevocably. Torture may have won a battle, but it lost the war. The victory for torture that he celebrates in 1957 was undone by 1962, when France granted Algeria independence after the Evian accords.

Torture divided and weakened the French determination to keep Algeria. Aussaresses's memoir confirms that it was opposed not only by intellectuals. Prefects and policemen and military leaders asked to be transferred. A few military doctors moved tortured prisoners into civilian hospitals to save their lives. Journalists wrote against it: the means corrupted the end itself, destroyed the very justification for staying. Aussaresses regards all these forms of dissent and moral scruple as hypocritical weakness. In fact they were a strength that saved France. It had granted independence to Tunisia and Morocco and thereafter to its other French colonies. It was impossible, over the longer term, to keep Algeria, whether by torture or by any other means. De Gaulle's moral realism—that no amount of repression could succeed against a people bent on independence—displayed a far greater grasp on reality than the hard-boiled Aussaresses.

THE REAL PICTURE of torture in Algeria comes not from Aussaresses's smug and disagreeable memoir, but from Frantz Fanon's recollections of the asylum in Blida, Algeria, where until his flight in 1956 he cared for both victims and perpetrators of torture. Fanon was wrong about many things, especially the fatuous idea, expressed in *The Wretched of the Earth*, that violence in the service of liberation actually heals and transforms the oppressed; but he was not wrong about the special horror into which societies sink when they meet terror with torture. In his psychiatric clinic at Blida, Fanon treated a twenty-eight-year-old French policeman who was so disturbed by memories of the screams of the men whom he had tortured that he stopped up his windows, put cotton in his ears, and still could not stop the screaming inside his head.

At the same time, Fanon was treating a "patriot" (an Algerian militant) who had been tortured and was still recovering from the use of electric shock. One day the tormented policeman, while waiting to see Fanon, happened to spot the "patriot" in the hospital garden. When Fanon came upon the policeman shortly afterwards, he was "leaning against a tree, looking overcome, trembling and drenched with sweat." Fanon took him home, where the policeman, lying on the sofa, confessed that he had just met one of his victims. After Fanon had sedated the policeman, he went back to the hospital and found that the policeman's victim, the patriot, had tried to hang himself in a toilet. The staff of the clinic could only calm him down by lying: they persuaded him that he had never actually seen his torturer. As for the torturer, he secured a sick-leave transfer back to France.

Torture in Algeria was not only a crime. It was also a mistake. It corrupted victim and perpetrator, French and Algerian alike. Paul Aussaresses's memoir is written in a style of rugged tough-mindedness, which calls itself realism, and which likes to mock liberal scruple for its sentimentality and inability to face hard choices. But this supposed realism and tough-mindedness is nothing of the sort. It is the kind of realism that wins battles and loses wars, a nihilistic cynicism that betrays and eventually destroys the causes it claims to defend. Americans, sorely tried by terror, should take note. ■

Paths of Story

By NICHOLAS HOWE

The Riddle and the Knight: In Search of Sir John Mandeville, The World's Greatest Traveler by Giles Milton

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 230 pp., $23)

Travels with a Tangerine: A Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah by Tim Mackintosh-Smith

(Welcome Rain, 351 pp., $30)

I.

IF THE BEST guides for travelers are books, why go medieval? Who really cares what a traveler seven hundred years before us had to say about a place? Of what interest can a fourteenth-century traveler from Tangiers be, even if he spent some thirty years on the road and racked up 75,000 miles? Or a mysterious English knight of doubtful existence who wrote in French about his travels beyond Jerusalem to the mythical Christian kingdom of Prester John? These books are fascinating reading in themselves, perhaps, but of what use can they be as guides to contemporary travelers, except for those stricken with antiquarian fever?

There is a good answer to these questions. If L.P. Hartley was right that the past is a foreign country, it is no less true that a foreign country is the past. For if these medieval travelers speak to conditions and practices in their time that survive into our own, even if only as religious

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traces or archaeological memories, then they remain useful as guides. The world that these medieval travelers mapped is largely gone, if it is considered as a physical place. Rivers change course, harbors silt up, buildings fall down, towns lose their names: all the necessary landmarks get lost or obscured. But the old and ancient world endures as a series of religious, linguistic, and cultural zones that we put on our own maps. And so, read at certain historical moments, these medieval travelers can help us cross (and understand) landscapes strewn with mines from the past.

The two fourteenth-century travelers in question—a Muslim from Tangiers and a Christian from England—rival the thirteenth-century Venetian Marco Polo in their range of geographic and ethnographic description, if not always in terms of their actual journeys. About the existence of Ibn Battuta (to use the more common English spelling), the traveler from Tangiers, there are no doubts. After leaving Morocco as a young man in 1325, he spent the next thirty years or so of his life ranging across Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa as well as Asia through to India and China. Most of his travels were within the Dar al-Islam, the Abode of Islam (including Moorish Spain), where he could always find work and rewards as a *qadi*, a judge of Islamic law, or as a counselor to rulers. In the course of his *Travels*, he writes of Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and other groups with a steadily observant and at times remarkably unopinionated eye. Ibn Battuta's *Travels* is a very, very long work, and in a Borgesian world it would require the same thirty years to read about his travels as it took to accomplish them, but even in our world it takes time and patience to work through his minutely detailed reports.

About Sir John Mandeville much less is known—so little, in fact, that his existence as a fourteenth-century Englishman seems far more likely to be brilliantly realized fiction than soberly attested fact. The personal and historical veracity of his *Travels* has been much disputed even by those who find the book compulsive reading. We know nothing about the author beyond what he tells us and what we believe at our own peril: that he was an English knight who left St. Albans to travel to Jerusalem and beyond in the years 1322–1356, and served both the Sultan of Egypt and the Great Khan. His work is written in French, which is not at all implausible for an English nobleman of the time, and it became one of the most popular books of the Middle Ages, translated into Czech, Danish, and Dutch, as well as all of the major European vernaculars. It continued to hold sway over the imaginations of later travelers; explorers such as Columbus and Frobisher treated Mandeville's *Travels* as one of the indispensable cartographic accounts of the world. A different sort of explorer, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, drew details for his description of Xanadu in "Kubla Khan" from Mandeville's pages. Whether or not Mandeville existed, let alone whether he traveled, he has had far greater influence over the imaginations of readers than have many explorers whose routes can be verified on a map, mile by tedious mile.

Given the territory they spanned and the years they traveled, could Ibn Battuta and Mandeville have ever met? Leaving aside the matter of whether Mandeville traveled anywhere other than in the books of his library, the question is best answered by considering how they meet today as writers. The most revealing common ground on which to place them together would be Jerusalem, because both were deeply religious men who venerated that city as holy ground. Here, in C.W.R.D. Moseley's translation, is a brief passage from Mandeville:

> The Saracens do great honour to the Temple of Our Lord, saying that it is a very holy place. When they enter it, they take off their shoes and kneel often with great reverence. When my companions and I saw them do so, we too took off our shoes and thought it was the more reasonable that we Christians should do as much worship and honour to God as unbelievers did.

In the Middle English text of Mandeville's *Travels*, the key phrase in this passage is "misbelieving men" (in modern spelling) rather than "unbelievers." The point is noteworthy, since it reminds us that for Mandeville the Muslims are not people without belief but people who are mistaken in their belief. And this gets at the ways in which Mandeville is characteristically a medieval writer, unable to imagine the world other than in religious terms.

Ibn Battuta is perhaps more explicitly a religious writer than Mandeville. Wherever he goes, he visits mosques, churches, graves of holy men, and other sacred sites. Still, like Mandeville, Ibn Battuta is rarely so pious that he ceases to be a sharp observer of the scene around him. Here, in H.A.R. Gibb's translation, he writes about that same holy ground:

> At Jerusalem also there is another venerated church to which the Christians come on pilgrimage. This is the church about which they lie and are persuaded that it contains the grave of Jesus (on him be peace). All who come on pilgrimage to it are liable to a stipulated tax to the Muslims and various humiliations, which they suffer very unwillingly. There too is the place of the cradle of Jesus (on him be peace), which is visited in order to obtain blessing.

If Ibn Battuta seems to have confused the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, he is remarkably sensitive to what it means to be the religious other, the Christian pilgrim in Islamic Jerusalem, as he notes the tax and "various humiliations" such travelers suffered.

Mandeville and Ibn Battuta meet as writers because they were both keenly aware of the spiritual life of all those around them, whether of their own faith or another. This awareness is not at all the same as modern religious tolerance, which is our term for living in peaceable ignorance of what others believe. Thus Mandeville is not exempt from his culture's usual vilifications of the Jews; and Ibn Battuta maintains an absolute doctrinal divide between Christians and Muslims, for all that they share the same holy ground.

In this post-September time, when "medieval" has become a synonym in the popular press for religious intolerance and fanaticism, when the troubles of our time are thought to have their origin in the Middle Ages, it is sobering to read these passages from Mandeville and Ibn Battuta. For they allow us to think about what the place of religious belief and religious difference might have been at a time when there was neither secularism nor any convenient distinction between religious belief and other aspects of daily life. Jacques Le Goff has said that the medieval period may best be understood "by its inability to express itself apart from religious references," a comment that extends to Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike. At a time when this kind of worldview risks being reduced to fundamentalism or barbarism, it is good to travel with Mandeville and Ibn Battuta to see what it meant to be a believer in a world of believers.

II.

For Mandeville, as for most medieval Christians, it was a commonplace to locate the center of the world in Jerusalem, historically and cartographically. Medieval European maps depict the world as a circle, an O enclosed by the ocean and further divided into thirds by the Nile, the Mediterranean, and the Danube (or sometimes the Don). This T-shaped demarcation of the Earth by waters yields Africa, Europe, and Asia. And at the center of these maps, where the

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three bodies of water meet, is Jerusalem.

In Mandeville's narrative, though, Jerusalem is at the center of the world in another and far more palpable way. From England through to Jerusalem was the realm of the known, the recognizable, the secure; beyond Jerusalem and the Holy Land was the region of the unknown, the mysterious, the terrifying. His *Travels* is best read as a two-stage narrative that shapes itself around this sense of the world. Or, in more medieval terms, its geography is allegorical rather than literal; it demarcates spiritual space rather than navigable terrain.

Mandeville begins his prologue by evoking "the land beyond the sea, that is to say the Land of Promise which men call the Holy Land." To get there, he quickly traverses Europe, which is familiar ground, and then arrives in Constantinople, where he views relics of the Crucifixion and recognizes the presence of Greek Orthodoxy as a form of Christian Other. From Constantinople, he goes by way of Cyprus to Jerusalem and the immediately neighboring sites of Christian history. Traveling through this region, Mandeville keeps his description soberly factual, offering ethnographic commentary such as this: "Know that among the Saracens, in several places, many Christian men dwell under tribute; they follow different laws and customs according to the constitution of the realm they dwell in." He cultivates his authority as a traveler by artfully disclaiming personal experience, most explicitly toward the end of his book: "There are many other countries and other marvels which I have not seen, and so I cannot speak of them properly; and also in the countries I have been to there are many marvels which I have not spoken of, for it would be too long to tell of them all."

With this carefully created persona of the traveler who tells only of what he has seen, Mandeville leads the reader into the regions beyond Jerusalem. And there all changes into the mysterious, the remarkable, the unlikely. He takes us through such regions as Amazonia, "which is the Land of Women, where women live by themselves with no man among them"; the city of Polumbum, where the Well of Youth can be found; the city of Calamy in India, where the image of the Juggernaut is located; the land of Abkhasia, which is "quite covered by darkness, so the people outside it cannot see anything in it"; the "Vale Perilous," which is thought to be the entrance to Hell; the hills of Caspian, in which "the Jews of the Ten Lost Tribes are shut up"; the isle of Pentoxere, which is the site of Paradise and belongs to the fabled Christian ruler Prester John, who someday will come from the east and liberate the Holy Land for Europe.

One must believe a geography this vivid: who could have made it up? The notion that unlikelihood can become a means of enforcing veracity, of compelling the reader's belief, lies at the center of most ancient and medieval travel accounts. To offer tales of elsewhere that read like home seems implausible, of course: if the other place is not different, then it must simply be home. The most convincing proofs that travel is necessary are the accounts of otherness and difference that travelers bring home with them.

For all that a modern reader can try to normalize Mandeville's journeys beyond Jerusalem into some sort of recognizable terrain, he is obviously writing of places where neither he nor anyone else has ever been. They are places that he and his contemporaries heard stories about, that they knew about on good authority. This claim to *auctoritas*, as a medieval writer would put it, is absolutely central to reading Mandeville's *Travels* or any other account of the world written during the period. What medieval people wanted from such books was not reportage based on actual experience that could be verified by reliable evidence, but lore that could be traced back to such authorities as Aristotle, Pliny, Isidore, and other early encyclopedists.

To call Mandeville's *Travels* a hoax, therefore, is largely to misunderstand the book and its genre. As David Roberts explains in *Great Exploration Hoaxes*, that sort of ruse depends on readers' expectation that the account that they have before them is an accurate representation of personal experience. If one thinks instead of a travel account as drawn from the writings of various authorities, then it can be judged a hoax only in scholarly terms. The question about veracity becomes "Did Pliny write about gold-digging ants, or was it Herodotus?" rather than "Did the traveler actually climb the mountain he claimed to have climbed?"

THE WORLD OF medieval travel accounts is one in which previous authorities are reprised in the form of narrative; it is a world of understood conventions and predictable authorial strategies. No medieval reader of Mandeville would have disparaged his book because its author had never left England. It is a very different world than we inhabit and record and should be entered only after taking some basic precautions. Into that world Giles Milton wanders like a Martian who has just landed on Earth and has no idea what are questions and what are answers. For a man who has read Mandeville's *Travels* obsessively so that

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he might track down its author and prove his existence, Milton can be surprisingly uninformed about his subject. He rarely draws on any of the previous scholarship about Mandeville, an excusable decision in a work of popular writing were it not that he so often misleads himself and his readers by failing to do so.

Milton's book contains errors that would make an undergraduate blush. To correct only a few in his first chapter: Chaucer has always been known as "the father of English poetry" and not of "English prose," since almost everything he wrote was in verse; surviving numbers of manuscripts are not necessarily a reliable measure of a medieval work's popularity at the time because some widely known texts were in manuscripts that were read to pieces or do not otherwise survive; English readers contemporary with Mandeville would not have enjoyed "Saxon" riddles, because they would have been most unlikely to understand the language of their Anglo-Saxon forebears from three or four centuries earlier. Milton has a preference for the jaunty offhand claim over the accurate statement. He would rather turn clever phrases than inform his readers of certain basic facts.

CENTRAL AMONG THOSE facts would be that there is no evidence of a fourteenth-century Sir John Mandeville who can be tied to the travel book that bears such a name for its author; that the *Travels* was originally written in French; that the book exists in various different manuscript forms; and that there are often significant differences among these manuscript versions. As Iain Higgins has shown in *Writing East*, the finest scholarly study of Mandeville, the *Travels* is less a unified book with a stable text than it is an instance of medieval textual variance: it is a kind of shifting collocation of texts drawn from various earlier authorities. It became a deeply influential and culturally central book because it drew these sources together, not in spite of doing so. Or, in plain English, if there is one thing Mandeville's *Travels* is not, that would be a reliable account by a traveler of the name Mandeville who can be verified historically.

Milton concedes as much in an evasive way at the end of his book: "What Sir John achieved in writing his *Travels* is far more important than the question of whether he himself went on his voyage." That is a remarkable admission to make on the penultimate page of a book that nominates the same Sir John as the "world's greatest traveler" in its subtitle. So why does Milton persist in his hunt for even the most tentative or obscure shard of evidence that will let him prove the scholars wrong and say that Mandeville, like Kilroy, was here? I have no idea, but it does lead him to indulge in a conspiracy theory about earlier scholars, as when he refers to "Victorian critics who did so much to bury Sir John's reputation" or claims that "the moralistic Victorians—disgusted by his fabrications—finally buried his literary reputation."

Milton never identifies any of these villainous scholars by name. Nor does he praise any recent scholars, such as Donald Howard or Stephen Greenblatt, who have treated Mandeville with respect. Milton seems unaware, moreover, that the scholars whom he accuses of spoiling his fun and Mandeville's reputation were most likely the ones who began the hard work of establishing Mandeville's text, the very same one that he twists and turns to find proof of its author's existence. And in an irony delicious to contemplate, these scholars were able to establish a reliable text of the *Travels* precisely because they understood that it was a literary collection and not a personal account. They knew to look in books, not in places.

The real reason to regret Milton's tiresome quest to prove Mandeville's existence is that it gets in the way of what might have been a lively and perceptive travel book of its own. When Milton is not fussing about whether various records from the fourteenth century mention a Sir John Mandeville (a more common name than one might have thought) or worrying about how scholars have impugned his subject, he can be very alert to the incongruities of the contemporary religious world. Indeed, the best pages of his book describe believers who live in places where one would not expect to find them. More often than not, these people are isolates or relics, believers stranded in a place after the tide of history has flowed in a different direction. They belong to the past, or, more precisely, to the glory days of a faith's past, and yet they speak to our own time.

The most compellingly drawn of these isolates is Father Isaias, a Greek Orthodox monk living in the Holy Trinity monastery on an island fifteen minutes by rusting ferry from Istanbul. There, in the midst of the Sea of Marmara, in the heart of Islamic Turkey, lives this one ascetic:

> Here, atop his lonely mountain, Father Isaias lived a life of splendid isolation. Detached from the cares of the world, he could sit and gaze longingly towards the imperial capital that once was Constantinople. He was truly a living fossil—a lone Greek still worshipping in Turkey—and I could scarcely contain my excitement at finding him.

This touching scene resonates with centuries of conflict between Greeks and Turks, but it quickly turns to comedy when Father Isaias tells Milton that he is not quite the "last living remnant of the Byzantine Empire" but a converted Englishman who grew up in Wimbledon. Indeed, this meeting with Father Isaias is proof that those who leave home in search of the exotic are all too likely to encounter exactly what they tried to leave behind.

Elsewhere Milton meets Wajeeh Yacob Nuseibeh, the Muslim keeper of the keys for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. As he explains to Milton, this is an old custom, because to "have a Muslim unlocking the doors is symbolic of the friendship between Christianity and Islam." He adds that the custom also diminishes frictions between the various Christian faiths, such as the Greeks and the Armenians, because "I am completely neutral and never take sides." It is a lovely moment, and one made all the more effective by Milton's description of Wajeeh: "his neatly clipped moustache gave him the look of a retired RAF pilot." Milton recounts similar moments of surprise in his book, as when he describes the beautiful Selimiye Mosque in Cyprus made from the cathedral of St. Sophia in 1570—a transformation that carries with it the history of that island; or when he tells of his visit to the monks of St. Catherine's in the Sinai as they lead their monastic life amid the rumble and the diesel fumes of tour buses.

Yet such fine and sensitive passages are relatively rare in Milton's book. Far too much of it is given over to the misbegotten quest to prove not only that Mandeville existed, but also that he traveled the world of his time and then wrote about it. The quest is worth making only if one has excessively literal standards for what makes a travel book worth reading: that it must be true in both its descriptions and its claims to authorial veracity. By these criteria, most examples of the genre could be tossed aside. And here Milton's refusal to take seriously the scholarship on Mandeville exacts its price. For he so utterly misconstrues the genre of the *Travels* that, once he concedes that its author's existence cannot be authenticated, he leaves the reader with little if any reason to turn to Mandeville. Had he, like a medieval reader, taken delight in Mandeville's gifts of synthesis and invention, he could have given his modern reader many reasons to trust the *Travels* as a guide.

III.

BY ONE READING, the line of British travel writers in Arabia that began with Alexander Kinglake in the 1830s, and included such others as

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Charles Doughty, T. E. Lawrence, and Freya Stark, ended with Wilfred Thesiger in the 1960s. After him, British writers found other deserts that were not so overwritten, as Reyner Banham did with the Mojave in *Scenes in America Deserta* or Bruce Chatwin did with Australia in *The Songlines*. Those writers from Kinglake to Thesiger, though, were remarkable for the extent of their wanderings, their deep learning, their sometimes eccentric prose—and for a sense of adventure that often displayed itself in a swashbuckling style and sometimes in fantasies of imperialist mission. That subsequent travel writers seem unable to imitate them is probably all for the good.

As one can conclude from the subtitle of his new book, *A Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah*, Tim Mackintosh-Smith has little taste for the heroics of travel or political adventuring. He does not belong in any obvious sense to the line of Kinglake, Doughty, and Company, and yet he seems as close to them as our time is likely to produce: the British Arabist, fluent in the language, deeply in love with the culture, and more than a little repelled by his homeland. The difference is that Mackintosh-Smith travels in the footnotes of a fourteenth-century writer and not in the political and religious conflicts of his time (about which he has very little to say).

The silly title of his book, *Travels with a Tangerine*, is likely to put off almost any American reader, and it is not saved by the fact that Ibn Battuta came from Tangiers and hence was in fact a Tangerine. Yet this is a learned, smartly observant, and very readable account. In a time of macho travel, Mackintosh-Smith is that admirable rarity: a self-restrained and bookish traveler who knows the territory and the texts. He is far more likely to make fun of himself than to aggrandize himself. This self-deprecation makes him a pleasant companion, at least to those readers willing to skim over some of his more esoteric excursuses into Ibn Battuta's sources. What is apparent throughout is that his book comes from a deep love of Ibn Battuta and of the Arab-Muslim world in which he has spent most of his adulthood.

MACKINTOSH-SMITH'S FIRST book, *Yemen: Travels in Dictionary Land*, which appeared in 1997, recorded his life in that country, particularly in its sleepy and decidedly unglitzy capital, San'a. The city's absence of glamour and wealth makes it all the more attractive to Mackintosh-Smith, who likes his places and things traditional, even somewhat shabby. In his Yemen book, he identifies himself repeatedly with his ancient canvas knapsack, a totem of what it meant to be a traveler before high-tech hiking gear and high-speed transport.

For all its subtle and learned portrayal of Yemen, this book has a somewhat affected quality; it is too much a coming-out story about how Mackintosh-Smith made himself into an Arabist. He opens with a very stagy passage about learning Arabic on the Isle of Harris by a peat fire as sheep graze outside. His point is obvious: he is leaving England, and especially Oxford, via a pastoral Scottish island so that he can find his true home in Yemen. In the midst of this celebration of Arabic's beauties, Mackintosh-Smith rhapsodizes about its use of the grammatical form known as the dual: "not content with mere singulars and plurals, Arabic also has a form for pairs." Wondrous, yes; but the English language had the dual as well, at least through the twelfth century. Mackintosh-Smith sometimes displays just a little too much of the recent convert's fervor.

In his new book, the image of the convert applies in a secular or cultural sense. Mackintosh-Smith remains a non-practicing or vestigial Anglican throughout *Travels with a Tangerine*, even though he is regularly taken to be a Muslim by those whom he meets in his passage through Arab lands traveled by Ibn Battuta: from Morocco to Egypt, Syria, Oman and neighboring islands, Anatolia, Crimea and finally Istanbul. In virtually every country that he visits, Mackintosh-Smith has a set-piece encounter with a resident of the place who, on hearing him speak fluent Arabic, asks if he is a Muslim or simply invites him to prayer. His reply must always be the same: he is a Christian, a non-believer, a Masihi. His answer usually baffles his questioner, who can never understand why someone who has learned to speak Arabic so well has not also converted to Islam. At times Mackintosh-Smith seems to write this scene as a way of showing how native he has gone. Yet even when it seems essential to his narrative, its frequent appearance makes one wish he were more forthcoming about his own religious beliefs.

MACKINTOSH-SMITH'S interest in Islam is far less religious than historical and literary. He opens *Travels with a Tangerine* with an encounter scene of his first discovery of Ibn Battuta in a bookshop in Yemen. Milton offers a similar scene for his first meeting with Mandeville in an English-language bookshop in Paris. In the contest of who best places his author on home ground, Mackintosh-Smith wins, especially because he pulls down from the shelf an Arabic edition of Ibn Battuta rather than a Penguin translation of Mandeville.

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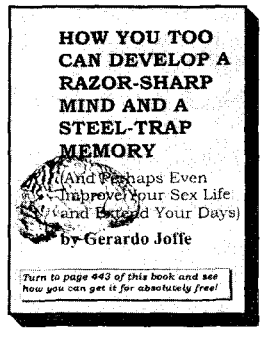
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Mackintosh-Smith's first response to the book is to experiment with translating its Arabic title into English: *The Precious Gift of Lookers into the Marvels of Cities and Wonders of Travel* or *An Armchair Traveler's Treasure: The Mirabilia of Metropolises and the Wonders of Wandering.* Finally he decides on the terser *Travels, tout court.*

From that encounter in a bookshop grew the present book. It is, as Mackintosh-Smith says, the product of having "always been conscious of the nearness of time past." That consciousness is continually reinforced by his experience of tracking Ibn Battuta, of writing what Arab scholars call a *dhayl* or "tail" to his predecessor's book. He finds that past in the expected forms—tombs, ruins, old mosques, houses made of fishbones, sailing ships, inscriptions, obscure texts—and also in the unexpectedly new, such as the international airport in Tangiers named for Ibn Battuta or the hotel of the same name there. The great traveler of the fourteenth century has become a brand name for late twentieth-century tourism.

This commercial afterlife of Ibn Battuta is directly related, for Mackintosh-Smith, to travel's centrality in medieval Islam: "*siyahah*—now simply 'tourism'—had the specific sense of mystical, transcendental travel" in the fourteenth century. Students in the Maghreb were trained in the sciences of chronology and astronomy so that they could become better travelers: "constant nomadism enabled the embryonic mystic to hatch into a higher state of consciousness." Mackintosh-Smith is himself largely immune to the seductions of mysticism, partly because he has too observant an eye for the here and now, partly because he prefers other intoxicants, but chiefly because he is too much of a reader. As the leader of a dervish ceremony says of him dismissively, "your head is too full of books."

If that makes Mackintosh-Smith an unlikely candidate for mysticism, it also makes him an exceptionally interesting travel writer. Unlike those contemporary practitioners of the genre who would rather face a local insurgent with an AK-47 than admit to reading a book, he includes in his itinerary of notable sights long visits with Arabic scholars who have edited Ibn Battuta as well as booksellers throughout the Arab world who stock him and his contemporaries on their shelves. The point of such visits is not simply to show that Mackintosh-Smith is himself a learned man; they also serve to establish the place of learning in the countries through which he wanders. Similarly, one of his standard moves as a traveler is to arrive in a new place and read aloud to those he finds there a passage from Ibn Battuta; and not infrequently he discovers that they know the passage, sometimes even by heart.

Mackintosh-Smith's learning would amount to little more than pedantry if he himself did not write a coolly observant prose that shows that he does have something in his head beside books. He is particularly good on olfactory sensations. Of a market in Cairo, he remarks: "The crowds were thinner than in IB's time, but the smells were still the same—incense, smoked fish, crushed coriander, freshly trodden dung, freshly killed meat." Or of Bursa, in Turkey: "The leaves were turning brown, and the city smelt of autumn, rich pastries and dead empires." There are also some wildly overwritten sentences, where he tries too hard for effect because he has too little to say; but when he is engaged with a place, when it evokes from him all of his learning and sympathy, he can write an elegantly restrained prose that carries the reader along with pleasure.

The most successful chapter in *Travels with a Tangerine* is devoted to the Kuria Muria Islands off the coast of Oman. This brief chapter, no more than twenty pages, is an idyll in the midst of his travels, though it is not without some comic moments, as when he is interviewed by a functionary from the Moral Guidance Department of the Omani Ministry of Defense, who keeps asking him for his impressions of the place. The interview evaded, Mackintosh-Smith visits the tombs of several island hermits who had been described by Ibn Battuta. When he discovers what he takes to be a slight depression in the earth near one of these hermitages, a feature described by his fourteenth-century predecessor, he admits unapologetically to a moment of awe. No direct evidence links him to Ibn Battuta at this moment, simply the conviction that he has found a spot from the *Travels*, and one all the more awe-inspiring for being so unmonumental, so unlikely to survive the turn of centuries.

The persistence of the past is Mackintosh-Smith's true theme, or, more exactly, the persistence of a tradition of learning about places elsewhere. When he arrives in a place, his plan for seeing and doing is shaped by his reading of Ibn Battuta. Survivals from the fourteenth century are not for him antiquarian trophies to be bagged; they are ways of thinking about a place across its history. When he arrives in Zafar, or Dhofar, he calibrates a decisive moment in Ibn Battuta's experience when he enters an unexpected world:

> Now far from the familiar central Islamic lands, IB was confronted by the new and the strange: coconuts, dried sardines as animal fodder, slave women running the *suq*, and elephantiasis and scrotal hernias "from which God preserve us!" All of these I intended to investigate, together with various sites mentioned by IB.

Out of this list of Battutiana, to use his coinage, Mackintosh-Smith constructs a portrait of Dhofar that makes one understand how it is that a fourteenth-century writer can lead one through a place with greater grace and accuracy than any guidebook written for our own time and place. For he knows, unlike the hack writer who has to work up a set passage on the local wonders to fill out his pages, that a place is not simply its wonders, or its history, or its smells. It is also the smell of that history and the history of those smells.

As he begins his tracking of Ibn Battuta, Mackintosh-Smith decides to fly over Algeria rather than pass through it, owing to the dangers of political unrest. The taxi driver taking him to the airport in Tangiers proves to be a true descendant of Ibn Battuta when he says: "In many ways, travel is more difficult now than it was in IB's day." For the modern reader, accustomed to quick jaunts anywhere in the world, this piece of wisdom runs counter to our common assumptions about the medieval world. If most people in the fourteenth century, in Morocco or in England, stayed close to home, those who ventured forward went into a world of unbearable inconveniences (no hotels, inedible food, erratic transport) and dangers (bandits, disease, religious enemies)—or so runs the self-congratulatory wisdom of the modern traveler. But the evidence, or at least some of the evidence, runs the other way. More of the world was open to the intrepid traveler in the fourteenth century than is open today to any traveler, cautious, intrepid, or lunatic.

Medieval travelers had their sites of fear, just as we do. Ibn Battuta recounts such a moment when he journeys back to Morocco after being away for many years in hopes of finding his mother alive. Booking passage aboard a Catalan ship bound from Tunis, he finds himself spending a night in the port of Cagliari, on the southernmost tip of Christian Sardinia. As he sees the fortified harbor and town, he feels a rush of fear such as he rarely knows anywhere else in his enormous *Travels* because he is in the foreign realms of Christendom rather than the familiar world of Islam. "I vowed to God Most High," he writes, "if He delivered us from the island I would fast for two months because we had learnt that its people had resolved to follow us and take us prisoners when we left." Ibn Battuta makes it home safely, and his readers are left wondering

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if there really was any threat in Cagliari other than what he felt as a stranger.

His bout of fear notwithstanding, the point remains that Ibn Battuta was free to travel in places that would be closed to virtually every traveler today. Borders are more fixed now and thus more likely to be sealed than they were in his day, and the mechanisms of travel are more tightly controlled by visas, reservations, and package tours. All of this makes the world a more restricted place, even if it is paradoxically also a smaller place. We get to those places that we can enter far more quickly than in the past, but there are probably fewer of them than there once were. For this reason, traveling with earlier accounts is a way of gaining access to the closed and the forbidden: what we cannot see for ourselves we can see through the accounts of predecessors.

Thinking this way about travel is to acknowledge the pressure that politics exerts on our experience of places. Mackintosh-Smith in *Travels with a Tangerine* shies away from contemporary politics, or, perhaps more accurately, he goes there obliquely. The only Israelis with whom he talks, for example, he meets while they are on holiday in Turkey. The absence of any direct account of Israel, Palestine, Jordan—of the Holy Land—is gaping, not only by our sense of the region but also by Ibn Battuta's sense of it. In fairness, Mackintosh-Smith holds out the promise of further books in the footsteps of Ibn Battuta. If so, he will have to follow his master to Jerusalem. And there, like Mandeville, whose *Travels* he carries with him and describes succinctly as "rather more textual than terrestrial," Mackintosh-Smith will have to decide how that city has shaped the map of his travels.

Reading Giles Milton and Tim Mackintosh-Smith—and more, reading their predecessors through them—one wants to ask, why leave home? Why travel? Putting aside such answers as fun in the sun or sex tourism or other indulgences forbidden at home, why travel? Putting aside the portentous claims for travel as a form of self-improvement, why leave home? I suspect that no one can answer that question better than did Mandeville in the fourteenth century. He understood that the desire to travel belongs to nothing less than our condition of being alive on this earth: "We are in a climate under the rule of the moon, which is a planet that moves quickly—the traveler's planet. So it gives us the desire to travel and visit different countries of the world, for it moves round the world more quickly than other planets." ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 4

attention to the principle of ex post facto. Lindh is being charged based on retroactive conditions. Had there been no post-9/11 decision to invade Afghanistan, Lindh would likely still be in Afghanistan on one side of a perpetual religious conflict and perhaps even as a U.S. intelligence asset.

HENRY FOWLER
Santa Maria, California

TO THE EDITORS:
Hoffman states that Lindh should be treated the same as his foreign comrades in arms because Lindh "voluntarily and intentionally renounced his American citizenship." Such renunciation of citizenship arguably puts Lindh outside the prosecutorial scope for certain crimes. Hoffman's evidence for Lindh's renunciation of citizenship is in two e-mails Lindh sent to his parents. I would never have guessed it was that easy to give up your citizenship. Or is Hoffman arguing that Lindh should now, post-arrest, be permitted to claim a renunciation dating back to . . . exactly when? The truth is that Lindh never did renounce his U.S. citizenship. Lindh can't now claim immunity from laws aimed at U.S. citizens committing crimes in other countries. While this idea has admitted appeal, it just sets Lindh loose to commit more crimes against Americans. Now that Lindh is a celebrity, Al Qaeda might even treat him with a little respect. Lindh is an American citizen who provided resources to terrorists, and he deserves to be in jail.

REBECCA BUTLER
Wayland, Massachusetts

Pie chart

TO THE EDITORS:
The Notebook item "Lies, Damned Lies, and Panel Reports" contains the following statement: "Now, if the tax cut encouraged consumers to spend more, then, by definition, they must have saved less. To say the tax cut encouraged spending and saving is nonsensical" (March 4 & 11). Obviously TNR does not understand that if the real wealth of the average person in this country was increased by allowing him to retain more of his income after taxes, then he could both increase saving and spending. If the pie gets bigger, the individual pieces are by definition larger—that is, if the number of pieces remain the same.

RICHARD H. EGGERT
Bella Vista, Arkansas

THE EDITORS REPLY:
Richard H. Eggert seems not to understand that national saving is the sum of private *and* public saving. Thus, if national saving is reduced through tax cuts, even if individuals save a bit more, the increase will be more than canceled out by the decrease in public saving.

Roaring '90s

TO THE EDITORS:
I agreed with Fouad Ajami until the end of his New York Diarist ("Reckoning," February 25). Yes, Bill Clinton was in many ways a disappointment. Yes, George W. Bush has responded to crisis much better than expected (and perhaps better than Al Gore would have). But "deficits are now unavoidable"? Please. We have deficits because the president wanted to massively cut taxes for the rich, and the Democrats lacked the courage to fight him. We could, and should, return to surplus tomorrow and still have the money to defend ourselves quite well. What is a scandal, what "in the end . . . must be paid for," is precisely that we are piling up debt rather than paying it off.

RUSSELL PITTMAN
Takoma Park, Maryland

TO THE EDITORS:
I agree with the thrust of Ajami's Diarist, but I think he horrendously distorts what went on in the 1990s. He is right to characterize the era as centered around globalization and technology. But the decade itself was far more complicated than some nonstop "giddy season" of excess, triumphalism, and blindness. While the bull market was a crucial piece, Ajami's overall characterization is a straw man of laughable proportions. He confuses the media's perception with reality—the very sin of which he accuses the '90s.

His idea that technology and globalization are double-edged swords is nothing close to new, that "[t]he very things we were celebrating—cybercafés, travel, mobility of money and people—were to be our undoing" is simply ridiculous hyperbole. It is true that terrorists have an advantage fighting an open society, but this did not begin in the '90s. Moreover, Ajami's argument makes it seem like technology is America's weakness rather than one of its primary strengths. Does anyone doubt that America's technology lead and global presence give it exceptional advantages in the world? Ask any European what he fears most about American power, aside from Hollywood and McDonald's. The technology that is proving our "undoing" just undid a tyrannical and repressive regime in Afghanistan.

KEVIN CHEN
Jersey City, New Jersey ■

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Regrets

THE 1929 NOBEL PEACE Prize was awarded to U.S. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg. And why not? The year before, he had persuaded the great powers to outlaw war. Among those that ratified the historic Kellogg-Briand pact were the democratic countries, plus Germany, Japan, and Italy. High-minded people, deluded that signed agreements shaped history, were delirious with joy. Barely a decade later, of course, most of the world was plunged into war. Did the committee that chose the prize's recipients have any second thoughts? After all, the very complaisance that the Norwegians honored surely encouraged the Axis to believe that the democracies would stand by as threats mounted. I know of no record that the committee expressed any regrets.

I HAD A SINKING FEELING WHEN THE 1994 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Yasir Arafat in the immediate aftermath of the Oslo accords and the handshake on the White House lawn. After all, Arafat's sole vocation in life was that of a terrorist, and, even if there were some sparse signs that he was ready to give up the murder of innocents, the choice was still morally unconscionable. As for Rabin and Peres, tough-minded men beguiled by both Arafat and their own lifelong yearning for peace, they immediately attended to their obligations under the agreement—even transferring weapons to the militias of what they knew would be an emergent Palestinian state. Arafat, of course, immediately set about blowing Oslo up, a mission he completed at Camp David and Taba in late 2000. And now, with the peace agreement for which they gave the awards in tatters, the Nobel trustees do have regrets. Not, amazingly, about Arafat—but about Peres. According to the BBC, "Members of the Norwegian committee that awards the annual Nobel Peace Prize have launched an unprecedented verbal assault on Israeli Foreign Minister and Nobel Peace Laureate Shimon Peres," saying "they regretted that Mr. Peres' prize could not be recalled.... One member said Mr. Peres had not lived up to the ideals expressed when he accepted the prize." Poor Peres. He still, to this day, retains all the Oslo illusions that Arafat has trashed. But that is not enough for anti-Israel, anti-Jewish Europe and not enough for the guardians of the prize, which will itself soon look like trash.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF ANTI-SEMITIC Europe today, just as during the Third Republic, is Paris. Every day brings news of another violent crime against French Jews and Jewish institutions, a wave of violence that most of the French oppose, but which the government of Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin has tolerated, even indulged, for far too long. Paris is also the headquarters of anti-American Europe. The latest expression of French anti-Americanism—aside from books claiming that the United States blew up the World Trade Center itself (see "Plot Development," by Max Berley, page 16)—is concern for the life of Zacarias Moussaoui, a French citizen and, according to the Justice Department, the would-be twentieth September 11 skyjacker. The U.S. government has charged him with six counts of conspiracy and will request the death penalty, which France abolished in 1981. The prospect of *citoyen* Moussaoui's execution has driven official Paris apoplectic. Yet the French are not exactly evenhanded in their hostility to capital punishment. After all, what have they said about the execution of suspected "conspirators" by France's ally, the Palestinian Authority? Last week, with the complicity of Arafat's regime, eleven supposed collaborators with Israel were murdered, their bodies dragged through the streets. A few days ago, six other such "collaborators" were sentenced to death by a quickie P.A. tribunal. But not a word has been heard from the enlightened anti-death penalty French, who seem to think that only the United States and Israel kill.

YOU WILL DOUBTLESS REMEMBER THE schadenfreude with which many in the American media greeted the "I won't go" to the territories declaration signed six weeks ago by some 300 Israeli reserve officers. This hint of resistance was viewed in both the United States and Israel as big trouble for Prime Minister Sharon's get-tough policy toward Palestinian terror. But why doesn't the media now note that draft resistance has practically evaporated since the seder massacre. Even Gideon Levy, a tiresome apologist for the Palestinians who writes for *Ha'aretz*, admitted in his April 7 column that "nearly 30,000 men were mobilized and they reported for duty as one man, making the refusal movement ... irrelevant." In fact, 5,000 Israelis who hadn't been summoned have actually *volunteered*. One signatory to the "I won't go" declaration, a son of friends and a beloved friend himself, confided to us that he would now go if called because his differences with the government's present policy are political rather than moral. The struggle against terror has now become what Levy himself calls "the people's war." It is a "people's war" because almost all Israelis now recognize that this struggle is not about the settlements or the occupation but about Israel itself, about their very homes and homeland.

IN THE 1930S AN OLD TEACHER OF mine, Max Lerner, wrote an essay called "Freedom in the Opinion Industries," making the then-heretical point that freedom of the press was the freedom of the capitalists who owned it. I don't think this is any longer the case. The media corporations are now quite varied, and liberal orthodoxies predominate in many of them. In his essay, Lerner proposed a remedy for capitalist domination of radio: "Two major airways reserved for the government and run for it not by its bureaucrats but by the guild of radio artists." Lerner got half his wish: We have one such network, and its audio incarnation is called National Public Radio (NPR). So, whose freedom does NPR represent? Certainly not the public's. Rather, NPR is the virtual property of a bevy of journalists responsible only to themselves and their orthodoxies—orthodoxies far more stringent than those imposed by the corporate networks. In fact, I don't know of a capitalist-run radio network that has a blacklist. But NPR has one, and the anti-terror expert Steven Emerson is on it—NPR confided as much to an Arab lobby in 1998. Emerson's sin (and my own as well, I believe—for I am not welcome either) has been writing and speaking for years about Arab and Muslim terror support networks in the United States. This greatly offended Loren Jenkins, NPR's foreign editor, some of whose more inventive fabrications I discussed in my February 11, 2002, Cambridge Diarist, "Foresight." But why should Emerson's intense interest in terrorism, and especially in Osama bin Laden, so rankle Jenkins? Perhaps because on August 27, 1998, Jenkins himself wrote an article about bin Laden in *Salon.com*. In it he ridiculed the Clinton administration's charges that bin Laden was responsible for terrorist acts against the United States and was planning more. These were mostly based, Jenkins alleges, on "bin Laden's own braggadocio and the bad company he apparently keeps.... [H]e seems to be more of a spiritual leader and financier than the sort of terrorist mastermind being alleged." Ah, the wisdom of the men who control access to our public airwaves. Perhaps NPR should arrange a special broadcast from Norway.

MARTIN PERETZ

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Why Blacks Support Vouchers

The *New York Times* recently published an op-ed commentary ("Why Blacks Support Vouchers") by Emory University visiting professor Michael Leo Owens. Excerpts follow:

Urban black America favors school vouchers, but its leaders don't. Vouchers transfer authority over the use of a portion of government education funds from bureaucrats to parents, who then may use their grants to send their children to the schools, secular or religious, they believe will best educate their kids....

If the Supreme Court rules ... that the Cleveland voucher program is constitutional, the decision will help some families, but it will not expand the educational opportunities of all black children. Even so, such a result is likely to increase black support for vouchers. It will also show how far out of touch the black governmental class is with its black constituency.

A 1999 survey by Public Agenda, a nonpartisan research group, found that 68 percent of blacks favor vouchers. A similar poll by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a nonpartisan think tank, showed that the percentage of blacks supporting school vouchers rose to 60 percent in 1999 from 48 percent in 1996.

Support is particularly strong among ... those between [ages] 26 and 35. And support exists broadly among women and men, liberals and conservatives, the poor and the prosperous.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies found, however, that 69 percent of black federal, state and local elected officials do not support a voucher plan like Cleveland's....Amazingly, almost three-fifths of black politicians rate their local public schools as excellent or good, while by nearly the same percentage other black adults rate their public schools as poor to fair.

Why do I and other African Americans support vouchers over the advice of black politicians? ... [W]e are desperate for decent education for our children. And people in my generation and those younger doubt the ability of black government leaders to influence public education policies in ways that would benefit our children. Our support for vouchers is essentially a critique of politicians' ineffectiveness.

In the post-civil rights era, the number of blacks sharing power

and responsibility for urban public education has grown dramatically....

Unfortunately, black bureaucratic enfranchisement has yet to affect black educational achievement. Test scores in the elementary schools in Atlanta's black neighborhoods are substantially worse than scores in public schools located in majority white neighborhoods.

Parental School Choice is Widespread — Unless You're Poor.

This is very disheartening, for it suggests that even in a city of black electoral empowerment and black wealth, black children have a tough time learning and performing well. This is why so many black parents ignore the counsel of black politicians on how to improve education.

My generation knows that vouchers have serious limitations. We recognize that no voucher program can save a failing public system....And vouchers can't end the resistance of many suburban schools to black enrollment.

But they offer the only hope available to many poor students trapped in the nation's worst schools. For a limited number of children, they may make a crucial difference. That possibility is enough for black parents to take a chance.

baeo
Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org or www.baeo.org

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